

MARGARET MILLER DAVIDSON

By Washington Irving

As found in his posthumously published *Biographies and Miscellanies* (1866) pp. 163-299.¹

[A biographical sketch of Lucretia Maria Davidson, who died on the 27th of August, 1825, just a month before her seventeenth birthday, was written by Mr. Samuel F. B. Morse, and prefixed to a collection of her poetic remains, published in 1829, under the title of "Amir Khan and other Poems."**² In a notice of this volume in the "London Quarterly Review," Southey remarks: "In our own language, except in the cases of Chatterton and Kirke White, we can call to mind no instance of so early, so ardent, and so fatal a pursuit of intellectual advancement."

The biography of Margaret Miller Davidson, her no less remarkable sister, who died in 1838, four months before she had attained her sixteenth year, was prepared by Mr. Irving in 1840, and prefixed to an edition of her literary remains in 1841. The copyright was transferred to her mother, at whose request the Memoir was written, Mr. Irving reserving merely the right to publish it at any time in connection with his other writings. It has been long out of print, and is now for the first time included with his works.

In allusion to this touching narrative, the author remarks in one of his letters: "In the Spring I shall publish a biography of Miss Margaret Davidson, with her posthumous writings. She was a sister of Lucretia Davidson, whose biography you may have read,—a lovely American girl, of surprising precocity of poetical talent. The one whose biography I have just written died a year or two since. It is made up in a great degree from memorandums furnished by her mother, who is almost of as poetical a temperament as her children. The most affecting passages of the biography are quoted literally from her manuscript." —Ed.]

~~~~~\*\*\*~~~~~

The reading world has long set a cherishing value on the name of Lucretia Davidson, a lovely American girl, who, after giving early promise of rare poetic excellence, was snatched from existence in the seventeenth year of her age. An interesting biography of her by President Morse of the American Society of Arts, was published shortly after her death; another has since appeared from the classic pen of Miss Sedgwick, and her name has derived additional celebrity in Great Britain from an able article by Robert Southey, inserted some years since in the "London Quarterly Review."

An intimate acquaintance in early life with some of the relatives of Miss Davidson had caused me, while in Europe, to read with great interest everything concerning her; when, therefore, in 1833, about a year after my return to the United States, I was told, while in New York, that Mrs. Davidson, the mother of the deceased, was in the city and desirous of consulting me about a new edition of her daughter's works, I lost no time in waiting upon her. Her appearance corresponded with the interesting idea given of her in her daughter's biography; she was feeble and emaciated, and supported by pillows in an easy-chair, but there were the lingerings of grace and beauty in her form and features, and her eyes still beamed with intelligence and sensibility.

While conversing with her on the subject of her daughter's works I observed a young girl, apparently not more than eleven years of age, moving quietly about her; occasionally arranging a pillow, and at the same time listening earnestly to our conversation. There was an intellectual beauty about this child that struck me; and that was heightened by a blushing diffidence when Mrs. Davidson presented her to me as her daughter Margaret. Shortly afterwards, on her leaving the room, her mother, seeing that she had attracted my attention, spoke of her as having evinced the same early poetical talent that had distinguished her sister, and as evidence, showed me several copies of verses remarkable for such a child. On further inquiry, I found that she had very nearly the same moral and physical constitution, and was prone to the same feverish excitement of the mind, and kindling of the imagination that had acted so powerfully on the fragile frame of her sister Lucretia. I cautioned her mother, therefore, against fostering her poetic vein, and advised such studies and pursuits as would tend to strengthen her judgment, calm and regulate the sensibilities, and enlarge that common sense which is the only safe foundation for all intellectual superstructure.

I found Mrs. Davidson fully aware of the importance of such a course of treatment, and disposed to pursue it, but saw at the same time that she would have difficulty to carry it into effect; having to contend with the additional excitement produced in the mind of this sensitive little being by the example of her sister, and the intense enthusiasm she evinced concerning her.

Three years elapsed before I again saw the subject of this memoir. She was then residing with her mother at a rural retreat in the neighborhood of New York. The interval that had elapsed had rapidly developed the powers of her mind, and heightened the loveliness of her person, but my apprehensions had been verified. The soul was wearing out the body. Preparations were making to take her on a tour for the benefit of her health, and her mother appeared to flatter herself that it might prove efficacious; but when I noticed the fragile delicacy of her form, the hectic bloom of her cheek, and the almost unearthly lustre of her eye, I felt convinced that she was not long for this world; in truth, she already appeared more spiritual than mortal. We parted, and I never saw her more. Within three years afterwards a number of manuscripts were placed in my hands, as all that was left of her. They were accompanied by copious memoranda concerning her, furnished by her mother at my request. From these I have digested and arranged the following particulars, adopting in many places the original manuscript, without alteration. In fact, the narrative will be found almost as illustrative of the character of the mother as of the child; they were singularly identified in taste, feelings, and pursuits; tenderly entwined together by maternal and filial affection; they reflected an inexpressibly touching grace and interest upon each other by this

<sup>1</sup> These are pieces gathered and edited by Irving's brother Pierre, and that first appeared in periodicals and special publications, such as a biography of Margaret Davidson the subject of this sketch. For the full text of *Biographies and Miscellanies*, see:

<http://www.archive.org/details/biographiesandm00irvigoog>

<sup>2</sup> [Footnote in the original] \* A more copious Memoir was afterwards written by Miss Sedgwick for *Sparks's American Biography*.

holy relationship, and, to my mind, it would be marring one of the most beautiful and affecting groups in the history of modern literature, to sunder them.

Margaret Miller Davidson, the youngest daughter of Dr. Oliver and Mrs. Margaret Davidson, was born at the family residence on Lake Champlain, in the village of Plattsburgh, on the 26th of March, 1823. She evinced fragility of constitution from her very birth. Her sister Lucretia, whose brief poetical career has been so celebrated in literary history, was her early and fond attendant, and some of her most popular lays were composed with the infant sporting in her arms. She used to gaze upon her little sister with intense delight, and, remarking the uncommon brightness and beauty of her eyes, would exclaim, "She must, she will be a poet!" 'Hie exclamation was natural enough in an enthusiastic girl who regarded everything through the medium of her ruling passion; but it was treasured up by her mother, and considered almost prophetic. Lucretia did not live to see her prediction verified. Her brief sojourn upon earth was over before Margaret was quite two years and a half old; yet, to use her mother's fond expressions, "On ascending to the skies, it seemed as if her poetic mantle fell, like a robe of light, on her infant sister."

Margaret, from the first dawnings of intellect, gave evidence of being no common child: her ideas and expressions were not like those of other children, and often startled by their precocity. Her sister's death had made a strong impression on her, and, though so extremely young, she already understood and appreciated Lucretia's character. An evidence of this, and of the singular precocity of thought and expression just noticed, occurred but a few months afterwards. As Mrs. Davidson was seated, at twilight, conversing with a female friend, Margaret entered the room with a light elastic step, for which she was remarked.

"That child never walks," said the lady; then turning to her, "Margaret, where are you flying now?" said she.

"To heaven!" replied she, pointing up with her finger, "to meet my sister Lucretia, when I get my new wings."

"Your new wings! When will you get them?"

"Oh soon, very soon; and then I shall fly!"

"She loved," says her mother, "to sit hour after hour on a cushion at my feet, her little arms resting upon my lap, and her full dark eyes fixed upon mine, listening to anecdotes of her sister's life and details of the events which preceded her death, often exclaiming, while her face beamed with mingled emotions, 'Oh mamma, I will try to fill her place! Oh teach me to be like her!'"

Much of Mrs. Davidson's time was now devoted to her daily instruction; noticing, however, her lively sensibility, the rapid development of her mind, and her eagerness for knowledge, her lessons were entirely oral, for she feared for the present to teach her to read, lest, by too early and severe application, she should injure her delicate frame. She had nearly attained her fourth year before she was taught to spell. Ill health then obliged Mrs. Davidson, for the space of a year, to entrust her tuition to a lady in Canada, a valued friend, who had other young girls under her care. When she returned home she could read fluently, and had commenced letters in writing. It was now decided that she should not be placed in any public seminary, but that her education should be conducted by her mother. The task was rendered delightful by the docility of the pupil; by her affectionate feelings, and quick kindling sensibilities. This maternal instruction, while it kept her apart from the world, and fostered a singular purity and innocence of thought, contributed greatly to enhance her imaginative powers, for the mother partook largely of the poetical temperament of the child; it was, in fact, one poetical spirit ministering to another.

Among the earliest indications of the poetical character in this child were her perceptions of the beauty of natural scenery. Her home was in a picturesque neighborhood, calculated to awaken and foster such perceptions. The following description of it is taken from one of her own writings: "There stood on the banks of the Saranac a small neat cottage, which peeped forth from the surrounding foliage, the image of rural quiet and contentment. An old-fashioned piazza extended along the front; shaded with vines and honeysuckles: the turf on the bank of the river was of the richest and brightest emerald; and the wild rose and sweet briar, which twined over the neat enclosure, seemed to bloom with more delicate freshness and perfume within the bounds of this earthly paradise. The scenery around was wildly yet beautifully romantic; the clear blue river, glancing and sparkling at its feet, seemed only as a preparation for another and more magnificent view, when the stream, gliding on to the west, was buried in the broad white bosom of Champlain, which stretched back, wave after wave in the distance, until lost in faint blue mists that veiled the sides of its guardian mountains, seeming more lovely from their indistinctness."

Such were the natural scenes which presented themselves to her dawning perceptions, and she is said to have evinced, from her earliest childhood, a remarkable sensibility to their charms. A beautiful tree, or shrub, or flower, would fill her with delight; she would note with surprising discrimination the various effects of the weather upon the surrounding landscape; the mountains wrapt in clouds; the torrents roaring down their sides in times of tempest; the "bright warm sunshine," the "cooling shower," the "pale cold moon," for such was already her poetical phraseology. A bright starlight night, also, would seem to awaken a mysterious rapture in her infant bosom, and one of her early expressions in speaking of the stars was, that they "shone like the eyes of angels."

One of the most beautiful parts of the maternal instruction was in guiding these kindling perceptions from Nature up to Nature's God.

"I cannot say," observes her mother, "at what age her religious impressions were imbibed. They seemed to be interwoven with her existence. From the very first exercise of reason she evinced strong devotional feelings, and, although she loved play, she would at any time prefer seating herself beside me, and, with every faculty absorbed in the subject, listen while I attempted to recount the wonders of Providence, and point out the wisdom and benevolence of God, as manifested in the works of creation. Her young heart would swell with rapture, and the tear would tremble in her eye, when I explained to her, that He who clothed the trees with verdure, and gave the rose its bloom, had also created her with capacities to enjoy their beauties: that the same power which clothed

the mountains with sublimity, made her happiness his daily care. Thus a sentiment of gratitude and affection towards the Creator entered into all her emotions of delight at the wonders and beauties of creation."

There is nothing more truly poetical than religion when properly inculcated, and it will be found that this early piety, thus amiably instilled, had the happiest effect upon her throughout life; elevating and ennobling her genius; lifting her above everything gross and sordid; attuning her thoughts to pure and lofty themes; heightening rather than impairing her enjoyments, and at all times giving an ethereal lightness to her spirit. To use her mother's words, "she was like a bird on the wing, her fairy form scarcely seemed to touch the earth as she passed." She was at times in a kind of ecstasy from the excitement of her imagination and the exuberance of her pleasurable sensations. In such moods every object of natural beauty inspired a degree of rapture always mingled with a feeling of gratitude to the Being "who had made so many beautiful things for her." In such moods, too, her little heart would overflow with love to all around; indeed, adds her mother, to love and be beloved was necessary to her existence. Private prayer became a habit with her at a very early age; it was almost a spontaneous expression of her feelings, the breathings of an affectionate and delighted heart.

"By the time she was six years old," says Mrs. Davidson, "her language assumed an elevated tone, and her mind seemed filled with poetic imagery, blended with veins of religious thought. At this period I was chiefly confined to my room by debility. She was my companion and friend, and, as the greater part of my time was devoted to her instruction, she advanced rapidly in her studies. She read not only well, but elegantly. Her love of reading amounted almost to a passion, and her intelligence surpassed belief. Strangers viewed with astonishment a child little more than six years old, reading with enthusiastic delight 'Thompson's Seasons,' the 'Pleasures of Hope,' 'Cowper's Task,' the writings of Milton, Byron, and Scott, and marking, with taste and discrimination, the passages which struck her. The sacred writings were her daily studies; with her little Bible on her lap, she usually seated herself near me, and there read a chapter from the holy volume. This was a duty which she was taught not to perform lightly, and we have frequently spent two hours in reading and remarking upon the contents of a chapter."

A tendency to "lisp in numbers," was observed in her about this time. She frequently made little impromptus in rhyme, without seeming to be conscious that there was any thing peculiar in the habit. On one occasion, while standing by a window at which her mother was seated, and looking out upon a lovely landscape, she exclaimed,—

"See those lofty, those grand trees;  
Their high tops waving in the breeze;  
They cast their shadows on the ground,  
And spread their fragrance all around."

Her mother, who had several times been struck by little rhyming ejaculations of the kind, now handed her writing implements, and requested her to write down what she had just uttered. She appeared surprised at the request, but complied; writing it down as if it had been prose, without arranging it in a stanza, or commencing the lines with capitals; not seeming aware that she had rhymed. The notice attracted to this impromptu, however, had its effect, whether for good or for evil. From that time she wrote some scraps of poetry, or rather rhyme, every day, which would be treasured up with delight by her mother, who watched with trembling, yet almost fascinated anxiety, these premature blossoms of poetic fancy.

On another occasion, towards sunset, as Mrs. Davidson was seated by the window of her bed-room, little Margaret ran in, greatly excited, exclaiming that there was an awful thundergust rising, and that the clouds were black as midnight.

"I gently drew her to my bosom," says Mrs. Davidson, "and after I had soothed her agitation, she seated herself at my feet, laid her head in my lap, and gazed at the rising storm. As the thunder rolled, she clung closer to my knees, and when the tempest burst in all its fury, I felt her tremble. I passed my arms round her, but soon found it was not fear that agitated her. Her eyes kindled as she watched the warring elements, until, extending her hand, she exclaimed, —

"The lightning plays along the sky,  
The thunder rolls and bursts from high!  
Jehovah's voice amid the storm  
I heard — methinks I see his form,  
As riding on the clouds of even,  
He spreads his glory o'er the heaven."

This, likewise, her mother made her write down at the instant; thus giving additional impulse to this growing inclination.

I shall select one more instance of this early facility at numbers, especially as it involves a case of conscience, creditable to her early powers of self-examination. She had been reproved by her mother for some trifling act of disobedience, but aggravated her fault by attempting to justify it; she was, therefore, banished to her bed-room until she should become sensible of her error. Two hours elapsed without her evincing any disposition to yield; on the contrary, she persisted in vindicating her conduct, and accused her mother of injustice.

Mrs. Davidson mildly reasoned with her; entreated her to examine the spirit by which she was actuated; placed before her the example of our Saviour in submitting to the will of his parents; and, exhorting her to pray to God to assist her, and to give her meekness and humility, left her again to her reflections.

"An hour or two afterwards," says Mrs. Davidson, "she desired I would admit her. I sent word that, when she was in a proper frame of mind, I would be glad to see her. The little creature came in, bathed in tears, threw her arms round my neck, and sobbing violently, put into my hands the following verses: —

'Forgiven by my Saviour dear,  
For all the wrongs I've done,  
What other wish could I have here?  
Alas there yet is one.

I know my God has pardoned me,  
I know he loves me still;  
I wish forgiven I may be,  
By her I've used so ill,

Good resolutions I have made,  
And thought I loved my Lord;  
But ah! I trusted in myself,  
And broke my foolish word.

But give me strength, oh Lord! to trust  
For help alone in thee;  
Thou knowest my inmost feelings best,  
Oh teach me to obey.”

We have spoken of the buoyancy of Margaret's feelings, and the vivid pleasure she received from external objects; she entered, however, but little into the amusements of the few children with whom she associated, nor did she take much delight in their society; she was conscious of a difference between them and herself, but scarce knew in what it consisted. Their sports seemed to divert for a while, but soon wearied her, and she would fly to a book, or seek the conversation of persons of maturer age and mind. Her highest pleasures were intellectual. She seemed to live in a world of her own creation, surrounded by the images of her own fancy. Her own childish amusements had originality and freshness, and called into action the mental powers, so as to render them interesting to persons of all ages. If at play with her little dog or kitten, she would carry on imaginary dialogues between them; always ingenious, and sometimes even brilliant. If her doll happened to be the plaything of the moment, it was invested with a character exhibiting knowledge of history, and all the powers of memory which a child can be supposed to exercise. Whether it was Mary Queen of Scots, or her rival, Elizabeth, or the simple cottage maiden, each character was maintained with propriety. In telling stories (an amusement all children are fond of,) hers were always original, and of a kind calculated to elevate the minds of the children present, giving them exalted views of truth, honor, and integrity; and the sacrifice of all selfish feelings to the happiness of others was illustrated in the heroine of her story.

This talent for extemporaneous story-telling increased with exercise, until she would carry on a narrative for hours together: and in nothing was the precocity of her inventive powers more apparent than in the discrimination and individuality of her fictitious characters, the consistency with which they were sustained, the graphic force of her descriptions, the elevation of her sentiments, and the poetic beauty of her imagery.

This early gift caused her to be sought by some of the neighbors, who would lead her unconsciously into an exertion of her powers. Nothing was done by her from vanity or a disposition to “show off,” but she would become excited by their attention and the pleasure they seemed to derive from her narrations. When thus excited, a whole evening would be occupied by one of her stories; and when the servant came to take her home, she would observe, in the phraseology of the magazines, “the story to be continued in our next.”

Between the age of six and seven she entered upon a course of English grammar, geography, history, and rhetoric, still under the direction and superintendence of her mother; but such was her ardor and application, that it was necessary to keep her in check, lest a too intense pursuit of knowledge should impair her delicate constitution. She was not required to commit her lessons to memory, but to give the substance of them in her own language and to explain their import: thus she learnt nothing by rote, but everything understandingly, and soon acquired a knowledge of the rudiments of English education. The morning lessons completed, the rest of the day was devoted to recreation; occasionally sporting and gathering wild flowers on the banks of the Saranac; though the extreme delicacy of her constitution prevented her taking as much exercise as her mother could have wished.

In 1830 an English gentleman, who had been strongly interested and affected by the perusal of the biography and writings of Lucretia Davidson, visited Plattsburgh, in the course of a journey from Quebec to New York, to see the place where she was born and had been buried. While there, he sought an interview with Mrs. Davidson, and his appearance and deportment were such as at once to inspire respect and confidence. He had much to ask about the object of his literary pilgrimage, but his inquiries were managed with the most considerate delicacy. While he was thus conversing with Mrs. Davidson, the little Margaret, then about seven years of age, came tripping into the room, with a book in one hand and a pencil in the other. He was charmed with her bright, intellectual countenance, but still more with finding that the volume in her hand was a copy of “Thomson's Seasons,” in which she had been marking with a pencil the passages which most pleased her. He drew her to him; his frank, winning manner soon banished her timidity; he engaged her in conversation, and found, to his astonishment, a counterpart of Lucretia Davidson before him. His visit was necessarily brief; but his manners, appearance, and conversation, and, above all, the extraordinary interest with which he had regarded her, sank deep in the affectionate heart of the child, and inspired a friendship that remained one of her strongest attachments through the residue of her transient existence.

The delicate state of her health this summer rendered it advisable to take her to the Saratoga Springs, the waters of which appeared to have a beneficial effect. After remaining here some time, she accompanied her parents to New York. It was her first visit to the city, and of course fruitful of wonder and excitement; a new world seemed to open before her; new scenes, new friends, new occupations, new sources of instruction and enjoyment; her young heart was overflowing, and her head giddy with delight. To complete her happiness, she again met with her English friend, whom she greeted with as much eagerness and joy as if he had been a companion of her own age. He manifested the same interest in her that he had shown at Plattsburgh, and took great pleasure in accompanying her to many of the exhibitions and places of intellectual gratification of the metropolis, and marking their effects upon her fresh, unhackneyed feelings and intelligent mind. In company with him she, for the first and only time in her life, visited the theatre. It was a scene of magic to her, or rather, as she said, like a "brilliant dream." She often recurred to it with vivid recollection, and the effect of it upon her imagination was subsequently apparent in the dramatic nature of some of her writings.

One of her greatest subjects of regret on leaving New York, was the parting with her intellectual English friend; but she was consoled by his promising to pay Plattsburgh another visit, and to pass a few days there previous to his departure for England. Soon after returning to Plattsburgh, however, Mrs. Davidson received a letter from him saying that he was unexpectedly summoned home, and would have to defer his promised visit until his return to the United States.

It was a severe disappointment to Margaret, who had conceived for him an enthusiastic friendship remarkable in such a child. His letter was accompanied by presents of books and various tasteful remembrances, but the sight of them only augment her affliction. She wrapped them all carefully in paper, and treasured them up in a particular drawer, where they were daily visited, and many a tear shed over them.

The excursions to Saratoga and New York had improved her health, and given a fresh impulse to her mind. She resumed her studies with great eagerness; her spirits rose with mental exercise; she soon was in one of her veins of intellectual excitement. She read, she wrote, she danced, she sang, and was for the time the happiest of the happy. In the freshness of early morning, and towards sunset, when the heat of the day was over, she would stroll on the banks of the Saranac, following its course to where it pours itself into the beautiful Bay of Cumberland in Lake Champlain. There the rich variety of scenery which bursts upon the eye; the islands, scattered, like so many gems, on the broad bosom of the lake; the green mountains of Vermont beyond, clothed in the atmospherical charms of our magnificent climate; all these would inspire a degree of poetic rapture in her mind, mingled with a sacred melancholy; for these were scenes which had often awakened the enthusiasm of her deceased sister Lucretia.

Her mother, in her memoranda, gives a picture of her in one of these excited moods.

"After an evening's stroll along the river bank, we seated ourselves by a window to observe the effect of the full moon rising over the waters. A holy calm seemed to pervade all nature. "With her head resting on my bosom, and her eyes fixed on the firmament, she pointed to a particularly bright star, and said, —

'Behold that bright and sparkling star  
Which setteth as a queen afar:  
Over the blue and spangled heaven  
It sheds its glory in the even!

Our Jesus made that sparkling star  
Which shines and twinkles from afar.  
Oh! 't was that bright and glorious gem  
Which shone o'er ancient Bethlehem!

"The summer passed swiftly away," continues her mother, \* yet her intellectual advances seemed to outstrip the wings of time. As the autumn approached, however, I could plainly perceive that her health was again declining. The chilly winds from the lake were too keen for her weak lungs. My own health, too, was failing; it was determined, therefore, that we should pass the winter with my eldest daughter, Mrs. T-- , who resided in Canada, in the same latitude, it is true, but in an inland situation. This arrangement was very gratifying to Margaret; and, had my health improved by the change, as her own did, she would have been perfectly happy. During this period she attended to a regular course of study, under my direction; for, though confined wholly to my bed, and suffering extremely from pain and debility, Heaven, in mercy, preserved my mental faculties from the wreck that disease had made of my physical powers." The same plan as heretofore was pursued. Nothing was learned by rote, and the lessons were varied to prevent fatigue and distaste, though study was always with her a pleasing duty rather than an arduous task. After she had studied her lessons by herself she would discuss them in conversation with her mother. Her reading was under the same guidance. "I selected her books," says Mrs. Davidson, "with much care, and to my surprise found that, notwithstanding her poetical temperament, she had a high relish for history, and that she would read with as much apparent interest an abstruse treatise that called forth the reflecting powers, as she did poetry or works of the imagination. In polite literature Addison was her favorite author, but Shakespeare she dwelt upon with enthusiasm. She was restricted, however, to certain marked portions of this inimitable writer; and having been told that it was not proper for her to read the whole, such was her innate delicacy and her sense of duty, that she never overstepped the prescribed boundaries."

In the intervals of study she amused herself with drawing, for which she had a natural talent, and soon began to sketch with considerable skill. As her health had improved since her removal to Canada, she frequently partook of the favorite winter recreation of a drive in a traineau, or sleigh, in company with her sister and her brother-in-law, and completely enveloped in furs and buffalo-robcs; and nothing put her in a finer flow of spirits, than thus skimming along, in

bright January weather, on the sparkling snow, to the merry music of the jingling sleigh-bells. The winter passed away without any improvement in the health of Mrs. Davidson; indeed she continued a helpless invalid, confined to her bed, for eighteen months; during all which time little Margaret was her almost constant companion and attendant.

"Her tender solicitude," writes Mrs. Davidson, "endeared her to me beyond any other earthly thing; although under the roof of a beloved and affectionate daughter, and having constantly with me an experienced and judicious nurse, yet the soft and gentle voice of my little darling was more than medicine to my worn-out frame. If her delicate hand smoothed my pillow, it was soft to my aching temples, and her sweet smile would cheer me in the lowest depths of despondency. She would draw for me — read to me; and often, when writing at her little table, would surprise me by some tribute of love, which never failed to operate as a cordial to my heart, At a time when my life was despaired of, she wrote the following lines while sitting at my bed : —

"I'll to thy arms in rapture fly,  
And wipe the tear that dims thine eye;  
Thy pleasure will be my delight,  
Till thy pure spirit takes its flight.

When left alone — when thou art gone,  
Yet still I will not feel alone:  
Thy spirit still will hover near,  
And guard thy orphan daughter dear!"

In this trying moment, when Mrs. Davidson herself had given up all hope of recovery, one of the most touching sights was to see this affectionate and sensitive child tasking herself to achieve a likeness of her mother, that it might remain with her as a memento. "How often would she sit by my bed," says Mrs. Davidson, "striving to sketch features that had been vainly attempted by more than one finished artist; and when she found that she had failed, and that the likeness could not be recognized, she would put her arms around my neck and weep, and say, 'Oh dear mamma, I shall lose you, and not even a sketch of your features will be left me! and if I live to be a woman, perhaps I shall even forget how you looked' " This idea gave her great distress, sweet lamb! I then little thought this bosom would have been her dying pillow!"

After being reduced to the very verge of the grave, Mrs. Davidson began slowly to recover; but a long time elapsed before she was restored to her usual degree of health. Margaret in the mean time increased in strength and stature; she looked fragile and delicate, but she was always cheerful and buoyant. To relieve the monotony of her life, which had been passed too much in a sick chamber, and to preserve her spirits fresh and elastic, little excursions were devised for her about the country, to Missisque Bay, St. Johns, Alburgh, Champlain, &c. The following lines, addressed to her mother on one of these occasional separations, will serve as a specimen of her compositions in this the eighth year of her age, and of the affectionate current of her feelings: —

"Farewell, dear mother; for a while  
I must resign thy plaintive smile;  
May angels watch thy couch of woe,  
And joys unceasing round thee flow.

May the Almighty Father spread  
His sheltering wings above thy head;  
It is not long that we must part,  
Then cheer thy downcast, drooping heart.

'Remember, oh remember me,  
Unceasing is my love for thee;  
When death shall sever earthly ties,  
When thy loved form all senseless lies,

'Oh that my soul with thine could flee,  
And roam through wide eternity;  
Could tread with thee the courts of heaven,  
And count the brilliant stars of even!

'Farewell, dear mother; for a while  
I must resign thy plaintive smile;  
May angels watch thy couch of woe,  
And joys unceasing round thee flow."

In the month of January, 1833, while still in Canada, she was brought very low by an attack of scarlet fever, under which she lingered many weeks, but had so far recovered by the middle of April as to take the air in a carriage. Her mother, too, having regained sufficient strength to travel, it was thought advisable, for both their healths, to try the effect of a journey to New York. They accordingly departed about the beginning of May, accompanied by a family party. Of this journey, and a sojourn of several months in New York, she kept a journal, which evinces considerable habits of observation, but still more that kindling of the imagination which, in the poetic mind, gives to commonplace realities the witchery of romance. She was deeply interested by visits to the "School for the Blind," and the "Deaf and Dumb Asylum;"

and makes a minute of a visit of a very different nature — to Black Hawk and his fellow-chiefs, prisoners of war, who, by command of government, were taken about through various of our cities, that they might carry back to their brethren in the wilderness a cautionary idea of the overwhelming power of the white man.

“On the 25th June I saw and shook hands with the famous Black Hawk, the Indian chief, the enemy of our nation, who has massacred our patriots, murdered our women and helpless children! Why is he treated with so much attention by those whom he has injured? It cannot surely arise from benevolence. It must be policy. Be it what it may, I cannot understand it. His son, the Prophet, and others who accompanied him, interested me more than the chief himself. His son is no doubt a fine specimen of Indian beauty. He has a high brow piercing black eyes, long black hair, which hangs down his back, and, upon the whole, is well suited to captivate an Indian maiden. The Prophet we found surveying himself in a looking-glass, undoubtedly wishing to show himself off to the best advantage in the fair assembly before him. The rest were dozing on a sofa, but they were awakened sufficiently to shake hands with us, and others who had the courage to approach so near them. I remember I dreamed of them the following night.”

During this visit to New York, she was the life and delight of the relatives with whom she resided, and they still retain a lively recollection of the intellectual nature of her sports among her youthful companions, and of the surprising aptness and fertile invention displayed by her in contriving new sources of amusement. She had a number of playmates, nearly of her own age, and one of her projects was to get up a dramatic entertainment for the gratification of themselves and their friends. The proposal was readily agreed to, provided she would write the play. This she readily undertook, and indeed devised and directed the whole arrangements, though she had never been but once to a theatre, and that on her previous visit to New York. Her little companions were now all busily employed, under her directions, preparing dresses and equipments; robes with trains were fitted out for the female characters, and quantities of paper and tinsel were consumed in making caps, helmets, spears, and sandals.

After four or five days had been spent in these preparations, Margaret was called upon to produce the play. “Oh!” she replied, “I have not written it yet.” — “But how is this! — Do you make the dresses first, and then write the play to suit them?” — “Oh!” replied she, gaily, “the writing of the play is the easiest part of the preparation; it will be ready before the dresses.” And, in fact, in two days she produced her drama, “The Tragedy of Alethia.” It was not very voluminous, to be sure, but it contained within it sufficient of high character and astounding and bloody incident to furnish out a drama of five times its size. A king and queen of England resolutely bent upon marrying their daughter, the Princess Alethia, to the Duke of Ormond. The princess most perversely and dolorously in love with a mysterious cavalier, who figures at her father’s court under the name of Sir Percy Lennox, but who, in private truth, is the Spanish king, Rodrigo, thus obliged to maintain an incognito on account of certain hostilities between Spain and England. The odious nuptials of the princess with the Duke of Ormond proceed: she is led, a submissive victim, to the altar; is on the point of pledging her irrevocable word; when the priest throws off his sacred robe, discovers himself to be Rodrigo, and plunges a dagger into the bosom of the king. Alethia instantly plucks the dagger from her father’s bosom, throws herself into Rodrigo’s arms, and kills herself. Rodrigo flies to a cavern, renounces England, Spain, and his royal throne, and devotes himself to eternal remorse. The queen ends the play by a passionate apostrophe to the spirit of her daughter, and sinks dead on the floor.

The little drama lies before us, a curious specimen of the prompt talent of this most ingenious child, and by no means more incongruous in its incidents than many current dramas by veteran and experienced playwrights.

The parts were now distributed and soon learnt; Margaret drew out a play-bill, in theatrical style, containing a list of the dramatis personae, and issued regular tickets of admission. The piece went off with universal applause; Margaret figuring, in a long train, as the princess, and killing herself in a style that would not have disgraced an experienced stage heroine.

In these, and similar amusements, her time passed happily in New York, for it was the study of the intelligent and amiable relatives, with whom she sojourned, to render her residence among them as agreeable and profitable as possible. Her visit, however, was protracted much beyond what was originally intended. As the summer advanced, the heat and restraint of the city became oppressive; her heart yearned after her native home on the Saranac; and the following lines, written at the time, express the state of her feelings: —

HOME.

I WOULD fly from the city, would fly from its care,  
To my own native plants and my flowerets so fair;  
To the cool grassy shade, and the rivulet bright,  
Which reflects the pale moon on its bosom of light.  
Again would I view the old mansion so dear,  
Where I sported a babe, without sorrow or fear;  
I would leave this great city so brilliant and gay,  
For a peep at my home on this fine summer day.  
I have friends whom I love and would leave with regret,  
But the love of my home, oh, ’tis tenderer yet!  
There a sister reposes unconscious in death —  
’Twas there she first drew and there yielded her breath —  
A father I love is away from me now —  
Oh could I but print a sweet kiss on his brow,  
Or smooth the gray locks, to my fond heart so dear,

How quickly would vanish each trace of a tear!  
Attentive I listen to pleasure's gay call,  
But my own darling home, it is dearer than all.

At length, late in the month of October, the travellers turned their faces homewards; but it was not the "darling home" for which Margaret had been longing: her native cottage on the beautiful banks of the Saranac. The winter winds from Lake Champlain had been pronounced too severe for her constitution, and the family residence had been reluctantly changed to the village of Ballston. Margaret felt this change most deeply. We have already shown the tender as well as poetical associations that linked her heart to the beautiful home of her childhood; a presentiment seemed to come over her mind that she would never see it more; a presentiment unfortunately prophetic. She was now accustomed to give prompt utterance to her emotions in rhyme, and the following lines, written at the time, remain a touching record of her feelings:

---

#### MY NATIVE LAKE.

Thy verdant banks, thy lucid stream,  
Lit by the sun's resplendent beam,  
Reflect each bending tree so light  
Upon thy bounding bosom bright  
Could I but see thee once again,  
My own, my beautiful Champlain!

The little isles that deck thy breast,  
And calmly on thy bosom rest,  
How often, in my childish glee,  
I've sported round them, bright and free!  
Could I but see thee once again,  
My own, my beautiful Champlain!

How oft I've watch'd the fresh'ning shower  
Bending the summer tree and flower,  
And felt my little heart beat high  
As the bright rainbow graced the sky.  
Could I but see thee once again,  
My own, my beautiful Champlain!

And shall I never see thee more,  
My native lake, my much-loved shore?  
And must I bid a long adieu,  
My dear, my infant home, to you?  
Shall I not see thee once again,  
My own, my beautiful Champlain?

Still, though disappointed in not returning to the Saranac, she soon made herself contented at Ballston. She was at home, in the bosom of her own family, and reunited to her two youngest brothers, from whom she had long been separated. A thousand little plans were devised by her, and some few of them put in execution, for their mutual pleasure and improvement. One of the most characteristic of these was a "weekly paper," issued by her in manuscript, and entitled "The Juvenile Aspirant." All their domestic occupations and amusements were of an intellectual kind. Their mornings were spent in study; the evenings enlivened by conversation, or by the work of some favorite author, read aloud for the benefit of the family circle.

As the powers of this excitable and imaginative little being developed themselves, Mrs. Davidson felt more and more conscious of the responsibility of undertaking to cultivate and direct them; yet to whom could she confide her that would so well understand her character and constitution? To place her in a boarding-school would subject her to increased excitement, caused by emulation, and her mind was already too excitable for her fragile frame. Her peculiar temperament required peculiar culture; it must neither be stimulated nor checked; and while her imagination was left to its free soarings, care must be taken to strengthen her judgment, improve her mind, establish her principles, and inculcate habits of self-examination and self-control. All this, it was thought, might best be accomplished under a mother's eye; it was resolved, therefore, that her education should, as before, be conducted entirely at home. "Thus she continued," to use her mother's words, "to live in the bosom of affection, where every thought and feeling was reciprocated. I strove to draw out the powers of her mind by conversation and familiar remarks upon subjects of daily study and reflection, and taught her the necessity of bringing all her thoughts, desires, and feelings under the dominion of reason; to understand the importance of self-control, when she found her inclinations were at war with its dictates. To fulfill all her duties from a conviction of right, because they were duties; and to find her happiness in the consciousness of her own integrity, and the approbation of God. How delightful was the task of instructing a mind like hers! She seized with avidity upon every new idea, for the instruction proceeded from lips of love. Often would she exclaim, 'Oh mamma! how glad I am that you are not too ill to teach me! Surely I am the happiest girl in the world!' She had read much for a child of little more than ten years of age. She was well versed in both ancient and modern history, (that is to say, in the courses generally prescribed for the use of schools,) Blair, Kaimes, and Paley had formed part of her studies. She was familiar with most of the British poets. Her command of the English language was remarkable, both in conversation and writing. She had learned the rudiments of



French, and was anxious to become perfect in the language; but I had so neglected my duty in this respect after I left school, that I was not qualified to instruct her. A friend, however, who understood French, called occasionally and gave her lessons for his own amusement; she soon translated well, and such was her talent for the acquisition of languages, and such her desire to read everything in the original, that every obstacle vanished before her perseverance. She made some advances in Latin, also, in company with her brother, who was attended by a private teacher; and they were engaged upon the early books of Virgil, when her health again gave way, and she was confined to her room by severe illness. These frequent attacks upon a frame so delicate awakened all our fears. Her illness spread a gloom throughout our habitation, for fears were entertained that it would end in a pulmonary consumption." After a confinement of two months, however, she regained her usual, though at all times fragile, state of health. In the following spring, when she had just entered upon the eleventh year of her age, intelligence arrived of the death of her sister, Mrs. T., who had been resident in Canada. The blow had been apprehended from previous accounts of her extreme illness, but it was a severe shock. She had looked up to this sister as to a second mother, and as to one who, from the precarious health of her natural parent, might be called upon to fulfill that tender office. She was one, also, calculated to inspire affection; lovely in person, refined and intelligent in mind, still young in years; and with all this, her only remaining sister! In the following lines, poured out in the fullness of her grief, she touchingly alludes to the previous loss of her sister Lucretia, so often the subject of her poetic regrets, and of the consolation she had always felt in still having a sister to love and cherish her

ON THE DEATH OF MY SISTER ANNA ELIZA.

WHILE weeping o'er our sister's tomb,  
And heaving many a heartfelt sigh,  
And while in youth's bewitching bloom,  
I thought not that thou too couldst die.

When gazing on that little mound,  
Spread o'er with turf, and flowers, and mould,  
I thought not that thy lovely form  
Could be as motionless and cold.

When her light, airy form was lost  
To fond affection's weeping eye;  
I thought not we should mourn for thee,  
I thought not that thou too couldst die.

Yes, sparkling gem! when thou wert here,  
From death's encircling mantle free,  
Our mourning parents wiped each tear,  
And cried, "Why weep? we still have thee.-"

Each tender thought on thee they turn'd;  
Each hope of joy to thee was given;  
And, dwelling on each matchless charm,  
They half forgot the saint in heaven.

But thou art gone, forever gone!  
Sweet wanderer in a world of woe!  
Now, unrestrain'd our grief must pour!  
Unchecked our mourning tears must flow.

How oft I've press'd my glowing lip  
In rapture to thy snowy brow,  
And gazed upon that angel eye,  
Closed in death's chilling slumber now.

While tottering on the verge of life,  
Thine every nerve with pain unstrung.  
That beaming eye was raised to heaven, —  
That heart to God for safety clung.

And when the awful moment came,  
Replete with trembling hope and fear,  
Though anguish shook thy slender frame,  
Thy thoughts were in a brighter sphere.

The wreath of light, which round thee play'd.  
Bore thy pure spirit to the skies;  
With thee we lost our brightest gem,  
But heaven has gain'd a glorious prize.

Oh may the bud of promise left,

Follow the brilliant path she trod,  
And of her fostering care bereft,  
Still seek and find his mother's God.

But he, the partner of her life,  
Who shared her joy and soothed her woe,  
How can I heal his broken heart?  
How bid his sorrow cease to flow?

It's only time those wounds can heal;  
Time, from whose piercing pangs alone,  
The poignancy of grief can steal,  
And hush the heart's convulsive moan.

To parry the effect of this most afflicting blow, Margaret was sent on a visit to New York, where she passed a couple of months in the society of affectionate and intelligent friends, and returned home in June, recruited in health and spirits. The sight of her mother, however, though habituated to sorrow and suffering, yet bowed down by her recent bereavement, called forth her tenderest sympathies; and we consider it as illustrating the progress of the intellect and the history of the heart of this most interesting child, to insert another effusion called forth by this domestic calamity: —

TO MY MOTHER OPPRESSED WITH SORROW.

Weep, oh my mother! I will bid thee weep!  
For grief like thine requires the aid of tears;  
But oh, I would not see thy bosom thus  
Bow'd down to earth, with anguish so severe!  
I would not see thine ardent feelings crush'd,  
Deaden'd to all save sorrow's thrilling tone,  
Like the pale flower, which hangs its drooping head  
Beneath the chilling blasts of stern Aeolus!  
Oh I have seen that brow with pleasure flush'd,  
The lightening smile around it brightly playing,  
And the dark eyelids trembling with delight —  
But now how chang'd! — thy downcast eye is bent,  
With heavy, thoughtful glances, on the ground,  
And oh, how quickly starts the tear-drop there!  
It is not age which dims its wonted fire,  
Or plants his lilies on thy pallid cheek,  
But sorrow, keenest, darkest, biting sorrow!  
When love would seek to lead thy heart from grief,  
And fondly pleads one cheering look to view,  
A sad, a faint sad smile one instant gleams  
Athwart the brow where sorrow sits enshrined,  
Brooding o'er ruins of what once was fair;  
But like departing sunset, as it throws  
One farewell shadow o'er the sleeping earth,  
(So soon in sombre twilight to be wrapt.)  
Thus, thus it fades! and sorrow more profound  
Dwells on each feature where a smile, so cold,  
It scarcely might be called the mockery  
Of cheerful peace, but just before had been.  
Long years of suffering, brighten'd not by joy  
Death and disease, fell harbinger of woe,  
Must leave their impress on the human face,  
And dim the fire of youth, the glow of pride;  
But oh, my mother! mourn not thus for her,  
The rose, just blown, transplanted to its home,  
Nor weep that her angelic soul has found  
A resting-place with God.  
Oh let the eye of heaven-born faith disperse  
The dark'ning mists of earthly grief, and pierce  
The clouds which shadow dull mortality!  
Gaze on the heaven of glory crown'd with light,  
Where rests thine own sweet child with radiant broir.  
In the same voice which charm'd her father's halls,  
Chanting sweet anthems to her Maker's praise;  
And watching with delight the gentle buds  
Which she had lived to mourn; watching thine own,  
My mother! the soft unfolding blossoms.  
Which, ere the breath of earthly sin could taint.

Departed to their Saviour; there to wait  
 For thy fond spirit in the home of bliss!  
 The angel babes have found a second mother;  
 But when thy soul shall pass from earth away,  
 The little cherubs then shall cling to thee,  
 And their sweet guardian welcome thee with joy,  
 Protector of their helpless infancy,  
 Who taught them how to reach that happy home.  
 Oh think of this, and let one heartfelt smile  
 Illume the face so long estranged from joy;  
 But may it rest not on thy brow alone,  
 But shed a cheering influence o'er thy heart,  
 Too sweet to be forgotten! Though thy loved  
 And beautiful are fled from earth away,  
 Still there are those who loved thee—who would live  
 With thee alone — who weep or smile with thee.  
 Think of thy noble sons, and think of her  
 Who prays thee to be happy in the hope  
 Of meeting those in heaven who loved thee here,  
 And training those on earth, that they may live  
 A band of saints with thee in Paradise.

The regular studies of Margaret were now resumed, and her mother found, in attending to her instruction, a relief from the poignancy of her afflictions. Margaret always enjoyed the country, and in fine weather indulged in long rambles in the woods, accompanied by some friend, or attended by a faithful servant woman. When in the house, the versatility of her talents, her constitutional vivacity, and an aptness at coining occupation and amusement out of the most trifling incident, perpetually relieved the monotony of domestic life; while the faint gleam of health that occasionally flitted across her cheek, beguiled the anxious forebodings that had been indulged concerning her. "A strong hope was rising in my heart," says her mother, "that our frail, delicate blossom would continue to flourish, and that it was possible I might live to behold the perfection of its beauty! Alas! how uncertain is every earthly prospect! Even then the canker was concealed with the bright bud, which was eventually to destroy its loveliness! About the last of December she was again seized with a liver complaint, which, by sympathy, affected her lungs, and again awakened all our fears. She was confined to her bed, and it was not until March that she was able to sit up and walk about her room. The confinement then became irksome, but her kind and skilful physician had declared that she must not be permitted to venture out until mild weather in April." During this fit of illness her mind had remained in an unusual state of inactivity; but with the opening of spring and the faint return of health, it broke forth with a brilliancy and a restless excitability that astonished and alarmed. "In conversation," says her mother, "her sallies of wit were dazzling. She composed and wrote incessantly, or rather would have done so, had I not interposed my authority to prevent this unceasing tax upon both her mental and physical strength. Fugitive pieces were produced every day, such as 'The Shunamite,' 'Belshazzar's Feast,' 'The Nature of Mind,' 'Boabdil el Chico,' &c. She seemed to exist only in the regions of poetry." We cannot help thinking that these moments of intense poetical exaltation sometimes approached to delirium, for we are told by her mother that "the image of her departed sister Lucretia mingled in all her aspirations; the holy elevation of Lucretia's character had taken deep hold of her imagination, and in her moments of enthusiasm she felt that she held close and intimate communion with her beatified spirit."

This intense mental excitement continued after she was permitted to leave her room, and her application to her books and papers was so eager and almost impassioned, that it was found expedient again to send her on an excursion. A visit to some relatives, and a sojourn among the beautiful scenery of the Mohawk River, had a salutary effect; but on returning home she was again attacked with alarming indisposition, which confined her to her bed.

"The struggle between nature and disease," says her mother, "was for a time doubtful; she was, however, at length restored to us. With returning health, her mental labors were resumed. I reasoned and entreated, but at last became convinced that my only way was to let matters take their course. If restrained in her favorite pursuits, she was unhappy. To acquire useful knowledge was a motive sufficient to induce her to surmount all obstacles. I could only select for her a course of calm and quiet reading, which, while it furnished real food for the mind, would compose rather than excite the imagination. She read much and wrote a great deal. As for myself, I lived in a state of constant anxiety lest these labors should prematurely destroy this delicate bud."

In the autumn of 1835, Dr. Davidson made arrangements to remove his family to a rural residence near New York, pleasantly situated on the banks of the Sound, or East River, as it is commonly called. The following extract of a letter from Margaret to Moss Kent, Esq.,\*<sup>3</sup> will show her anticipations and plans on this occasion : —

---

<sup>3</sup> [Footnote in the original] \* This gentleman was an early and valued friend of the Davidson family, and is honorably mentioned by Mr. Morse for the interest he took in the education of Lucretia. The notice of Mr. Morse, however, leaves it to be supposed that Mr. Kent's acquaintance with Dr. and Mrs. Davidson was brought about by his admiration of their daughter's talents, and commenced with overtures for her instruction. The following extract of a letter from Mrs. Davidson will place this matter in a proper light, and show that these offers on the part of Mr. Kent, and the partial acceptance of them by Dr. and Mrs. Davidson, were warranted by the terms of intimacy which before existed between them. "I had the pleasure," says Mrs. Davidson, "to know Mr. Kent before my marriage, after which he frequently called at our house when visiting his sister, with whom I was on terms of intimacy. On one of these occasions he saw Lucretia. He had often seen her

“September 20, 1835.

“We shall soon leave Ballston for New York. We are to reside in a beautiful spot upon the East River, near the Shot Tower, four miles from town, romantically called Ruremont. Will it not be delightful? Reunited to father and brothers, we must, we will be happy! We shall keep a horse and a little pleasure wagon, to transport us to and from town. But I intend my time shall be constantly employed in my studies, which I hope I shall continue to pursue at home. I wish (and mamma concurs in the opinion that it is best) to devote this winter to the study of the Latin and French languages, while music and dancing will unbend my mind after close application to those studies, and give me that recreation which mother deems requisite for me. If father can procure private teachers for me, I shall be saved the dreadful alternative of a boarding-school. Mother could never endure the thought of one for me, and my own aversion is equally strong. Oh! my dear uncle, you must come and see us. Come soon and stay long. Try to be with us at Christmas. Mother’s health is no4, as good as when you was here. I hope she will be benefited by a residence in her native city, — in the neighborhood of those friends she best loves. The state of her mind has an astonishing effect upon her health.”

The following letter to the same gentleman, is dated October 18, 1835: “We are now at Ruremont, and a more delightful place I never saw. The house is large, pleasant, and commodious, and the old-fashioned style of everything around it transports the mind to days long gone by, and my imagination is constantly upon the rack to burden the past with scenes transacted on this very spot. In the rear of the mansion a lawn, spangled with beautiful flowers, and shaded by spreading trees, slopes gently down to the river side, where vessels of every description are constantly spreading their white sails to the wind. In front, a long shady avenue leads to the door, and a large extent of beautiful undulating ground is spread with fruit-trees of every description. In and about the house there are so many little nooks and by-places, that sometimes I fancy it has been the resort of smugglers; and who knows but I shall yet find their hidden treasures somewhere? Do come and see us, my dear uncle; but you must come soon, if you would enjoy any of the beauties of the place. The trees have already doffed their robe of green, and assumed the red and yellow of autumn, and the paths are strewn with fallen leaves. But there is loveliness even in the decay of nature. But do, do come soon, or the branches will be leafless, and the cold winds will prevent the pleasant rambles we now enjoy. Dear mother has twice accompanied me a short distance about the grounds, and indeed I think her health has improved since we removed to New York, though she is still very feeble. Her mind is much relieved, having her little family gathered once more around her. You well know how great an effect her spirits have upon her health. Oh! if my dear mother is only in comfortable health, and you will come, I think I shall spend a delightful winter prosecuting my studies at home.”

“For a short time,” writes Mrs. Davidson, “ she seemed to luxuriate upon the beauties of this lovely place. She selected her own room, and adjusted all her little tasteful ornaments. Her books and drawing implements were transported to this chosen spot. Still she hovered around me like my shadow. Mother’s room was still her resting-place, mother’s bosom her sanctuary. She sketched a plan for one or two poems which were never finished. But her enjoyment was soon interrupted. She was again attacked by her old enemy, and though her confinement to her room was of short duration, she did not get rid of the cough. A change now came over her mind. Hitherto she had always delighted in serious conversation on heaven; the pure and elevated occupations of saints and angels in a future state had proved a delightful source of contemplation; and she would become so animated that it seemed sometimes as if she would fly to realize her hopes and joys! Now her young heart appeared to cling to life and its enjoyments, and more closely than I had ever known it. ‘She was never ill.’ — When asked the question, ‘Margaret, how are you?’ ‘Well, quite well,’ was her reply, when it was obvious to me, who watched her every look, that she had scarcely strength to sustain her weak frame. She saw herself the last daughter of her idolizing parents — the only sister of her devoted brothers! Life had acquired new charms, though she had always been a happy, light-hearted child.”

The following lines, written about this time, show the elasticity of her spirit and the bounding vivacity of her imagination, that seemed to escape, as in a dream, from the frail tenement of clay in which they were encased : —

#### STANZAS.

Oh, for the pinions of a bird,  
To bear me far away,  
Where songs of other lands are heard,  
And other waters play!

For some aerial car, to fly  
On through the realms of light,

---

when a child, but she had changed much. Her uncommon personal beauty, graceful manners, and superior intellectual endowments made a strong impression on him. He conversed with her, and examined her on the different branches which she was studying, and pronounced her a good English scholar. He also found her well read, and possessing a fund of general information. He warmly expressed his admiration of her talents, and urged me to consent that he should adopt her as his daughter, and complete her education on the most liberal plan. I so far acceded to his proposition as to permit him to place her with Mrs. Willard, and assured him I would take his generous offer into consideration. Had she lived, we should have complied with his wishes, and Lucretia would have been the child of his adoption. The pure and disinterested friendship of this excellent man continued until the day of his death. For Margaret he manifested the affection of a father, and the attachment was returned by her with all the warmth of a young and grateful heart. She always addressed him as her dear uncle Kent.”

To regions rife with poesy,  
And teeming with delight.

O'er many a wild and classic stream  
In ecstasy I'd bend.  
And hail each ivy-covered tower  
As though it were a friend.

O'er piles where many a wintry blast  
Is swept in mournful tones,  
And fraught with scenes long glided part,  
It shrieks, and sighs, and moans.

Though many a shadowy grove, and round  
Full many a cloister'd hall,  
And corridors, where every step  
With echoing peal doth fall.

Enchanted with the dreariness,  
And awe-struck with the gloom,  
I would wander, like a spectre,  
'Mid the regions of the tomb.

And Memory her enchanting veil  
Around my soul should twine;  
And Superstition, wildly pale,  
Should woo me to her shrine;

I 'd cherish still her witching gloom,  
Half shrinking in my dread,  
But, powerless to dissolve the spell,  
Pursue her fearful tread.

Oh, what unmingling pleasure then  
My youthful heart would feel,  
As o'er its thrilling chords each thought  
Of former days would steal, —

Of centuries in oblivion wrapt,  
Of forms which long were cold,  
And all of terror, all of woe,  
That history's page has told.

How fondly in my bosom  
Would its monarch, Fancy, reign,  
And spurn earth's meaner offices  
With glorious disdain.

Amid the scenes of past delight,  
Or misery, I 'd roam:  
Where ruthless tyrants swayed in might, —  
Where princes found a home;

Where heroes have enwreathed their brows  
With chivalric renown;  
Where Beauty's hand, as Valor's meed,  
Hath twined the laurel crown.

I 'd stand where proudest kings have stood,  
Or kneel where slaves have knelt,  
Till wrapt in magic solitude,  
I feel what they have felt.

Oh, for the pinions of a bird,  
To waft me far away,  
Where songs of other lands are heard  
And other waters play!

About this time Mrs. Davidson received a letter from the English gentleman for whom Margaret, when quite a child, had conceived such a friendship, her dear elder brother, as she used to call him. The letter bore testimony to his

undiminished regard. He was in good health; married to a very estimable and lovely woman; was the father of a fine little girl, and was at Havana with his family, where he kindly entreated Mrs. Davidson and Margaret to join them, being sure that a winter passed in that mild climate would have the happiest effect upon their healths. His doors, his heart, he added, were open to receive them, and his amiable consort impatient to bid them welcome. "Margaret," says Mrs. Davidson, "was overcome by the perusal of this letter. She laughed and wept alternately. One moment urged me to go; 'she was herself well, but she was sure it would cure me;' the next moment felt as though she could not leave the friends to whom she had so recently been reunited. Oh, had I gone at that time, perhaps my child might still have lived to bless me!"

During the first weeks of Margaret's residence at Ruremont, the character and situation of the place seized powerfully upon her imagination. "The curious structure of this old-fashioned house," says Mrs. Davidson, "its picturesque appearance, the varied and beautiful grounds which surrounded it, called up a thousand poetic images and romantic ideas. A long gallery, a winding staircase, a dark, narrow passage, a trap-door, large apartments, with massive doors and heavy iron bars and bolts, all set her mind teeming with recollections of what she had read and imagined of old castles, banditti, smugglers, &c. She roamed over the place in perfect ecstasy, peopling every part with images of her own imagination, and fancying it the scene of some foregone event of dark and thrilling interest." There was, in fact, some palpable material for all this spinning and weaving of the fancy. The writer of this memoir visited Ruremont at the time it was occupied by the Davidson family. It was a spacious, and somewhat crazy and poetical-looking mansion, with large waste apartments. The grounds were rather wild and overgrown, but so much the more picturesque. It stood on the banks of the Sound, the waters of which rushed, with whirling and impetuous tides, below, hurrying on to the dangerous strait of Hell Gate. Nor was this neighborhood without its legendary tales. These wild and lonely shores had, in former times, been the resort of smugglers and pirates. Hard by this very place stood the country retreat of Ready Money Prevost, of dubious and smuggling memory, with his haunted tomb, in which he was said to conceal his contraband riches; and scarce a secret spot about these shores but had some tradition connected with it of Kidd the pirate and his buried treasures. All these circumstances were enough to breed thick-coming fancies in so imaginative a brain, and the result was a drama in six acts, entitled "The Smuggler," the scene of which was laid at Ruremont in the old time of the Province. The play was written with great rapidity, and, considering she was little more than twelve years of age, and had never visited a theatre but once in her life, evinced great aptness and dramatic talent. It was to form a domestic entertainment for Christmas holidays; the spacious back-parlor was to be fitted up for the theatre. In planning and making arrangements for the performance, she seemed perfectly happy, and her step resumed its wonted elasticity, though her anxious mother often detected a suppressed cough and remarked a hectic flush upon her cheek. "We now found," says Mrs. Davidson, "that private teachers were not to be procured at Ruremont, and I feared to have her enter upon a course of study which had been talked of before we came to this place. I thought she was too feeble for close mental application, while she was striving, by the energies of her mind and bodily exertion, (which only increased the morbid excitement of her system,) to overcome disease, that she feared was about to fasten itself upon her. She was the more anxious, therefore, to enter upon her studies; and when she saw solicitude in my countenance and manner, she would fix her sweet sad eyes upon my face, as if she would read my very soul, yet dreaded to know what she might find written there. I knew and could understand her feelings; she also understood mine; and there seemed to be a tacit compact between us that this subject, at present, was forbidden ground. Her father and brothers were lulled into security by her cheerful manner and constant assertion that she was well, and considered her cough the effect of recent cold. My opinion to the contrary was regarded as the result of extreme maternal anxiety."

She accordingly went to town three times a week, to take lessons in French, music, and dancing. Her progress in French was rapid, and the correctness and elegance of her translations surprised her teachers. Her friends in the city, seeing her look so well and appear so sprightly, encouraged her to believe that air and exercise would prove more beneficial than confinement to the house. She went to town in the morning and returned in the evening in an open carriage, with her father and one of her elder brothers, each of whom was confined to his respective office until night. In this way she was exposed to the rigors of an unusually cold season, yet she heeded them not, but returned home full of animation to join her little brothers in preparations for their holiday fete. Their anticipations of a joyous Christmas were doomed to sad disappointment. As the time approached, two of her brothers were taken ill. One of these, a beautiful boy about nine years of age, had been the favorite companion of her recreations, and she had taken great interest in his mental improvement. "Towards the close of 1835," says her mother, "he began to droop; his cheek grew pale, his step languid, and his bright eye heavy. Instead of rolling the hoop, and bounding across the lawn to meet his sister on her return from the city, he drooped by the side of his feeble mother, and could not bear to be parted from her; at length he was taken to his bed, and, after lingering four months, he died. This was Margaret's first acquaintance with death. She witnessed his gradual decay almost unconsciously, but still persuaded herself 'He will, he must get well!' She saw her sweet little playfellow reclining upon my bosom during his last agonies; she witnessed the bright glow which flashed upon his long-faded cheek; she beheld the unearthly light of his beautiful eye, as he pressed his dying lips to mine and exclaimed, 'Mother! dear mother! the last hour has come!' Oh! it was indeed an hour of anguish never to be forgotten. Its effect upon her youthful mind was as lasting as her life. The sudden change from life and animation to the still unconsciousness of death, for the time almost paralyzed her. She shed no tear, but stood like a statue upon the scene of death. But when her eldest brother tenderly led her from the room her tears gushed forth — it was near midnight, and the first thing that aroused her to a sense of what was going on around her, was the thought of my bereavement, and a conviction that it was her province to console me."

We subjoin a record, from her own pen, of her feelings on this lamentable occasion: —

#### ON THE CORPSE OF MY LITTLE BROTHER KENT.

Beauteous form of soulless clay'  
Image of what once was life!  
Hushed is thy pulse's feeble play,  
And ceased the pangs of mortal strife.

Oh! I have heard thy dying groan,  
Have seen thy last of earthly pain;  
And while I weep that thou art gone,  
I cannot wish thee here again.

For ah! the calm and peaceful smile  
Upon that clay-cold brow of thine,  
Speaks of a spirit freed from sin, —  
A spirit joyful and divine.

But thou art gone! and this cold clay  
Is all that now remains of thee;  
For thy freed soul hath winged its way  
To blessed immortality.

That dying smile, that dying groan,  
I never, never can forget,  
Till Death's cold hand hath clasped my own, —  
His impress on my brow has set.

Those low, and sweet, and plaintive tones,  
Which o'er my heart like music swept,  
And the deep, deathlike, chilling moans  
Which from thy heaving bosom crept.  
Oh! thou wert beautiful and fair,

Our loveliest and our dearest one!  
No more thy pains or joys we share,  
No more — my brother, thou art gone.

Thou art gone! What agony, what woe  
In that brief sentence is expressed!  
Oh, that the burring tears could flow,  
And draw this mountain from my breast!

The anguish of the mother was still more intense, as she saw her bright and beautiful but perishable offspring thus, one by one, snatched away from her. "My own weak frame," says she, "was unable longer to sustain the effects of long watching and deep grief. I had not only lost my lovely boy, but I felt a strong conviction that I must soon resign my Margaret; or rather, that she would soon follow me to a premature grave. Although she still persisted in the belief that she was well, the irritating cough, the hectic flush, (so often mistaken for the bloom of health,) the hurried beating of the heart, and the drenching night-perspirations confirmed me in this belief, and I sank under this accumulated load of affliction. For three weeks I hovered upon the borders of the grave; and when I arose from this bed of pain, so feeble that I could not sustain my own weight, it was to witness the rupture of a blood-vessel in her lungs, caused by exertions to suppress a cough. Oh, it was agony to see her thus! I was compelled to conceal every appearance of alarm, lest the agitation of her mind should produce fatal consequences. As I seated myself by her, she raised her speaking eyes to mine with a mournful, inquiring gaze; and as she read the anguish which I could not conceal, she turned away with a look of despair. She spoke not a word, but silence, still, deathlike silence, pervaded the apartment." The best of medical aid was called in, but the physicians gave no hope; they considered it a deep-seated case of pulmonary consumption. All that could be done was to alleviate the symptoms, and protract life as long as possible, by lessening the excitement of the system. When Mrs. Davidson returned to the bedside, after an interview with the physicians, she was regarded with an anxious, searching look by the lovely little sufferer, but not a question was made. Margaret seemed fearful of receiving a discouraging reply, and "lay, all pale and still, (except when agitated by the cough,) striving to calm the tumult of her thoughts," while her mother seated herself by her pillow, trembling with weakness and sorrow. Long and anxious were the days and nights spent in watching over her. Every sudden movement or emotion excited the hemorrhage. "Not a murmur escaped her lips," says her mother, "during her protracted sufferings. 'How are you, love? how have you rested during the night?' 'Well, dear mamma; I have slept sweetly.' I have been night after night beside her restless couch, wiped the cold dew from her brow, and kissed her faded cheek in all the agony of grief, while she unconsciously slept on; or if she did awake, her calm sweet smile, which seemed to emanate from heaven, has, spite of my reason, lighted my heart with hope. Except when very ill, she was ever a bright dreamer. Her visions were usually of an unearthly cast, — about heaven and angels. She was wandering among the stars; her sainted sisters were her pioneers; her cherub brother walked hand-in-hand with her through the gardens of Paradise! I was always an early riser; but after Margaret began to decline I never disturbed her until time to rise for breakfast, a season of social intercourse in which she delighted to unite, and from which she was never willing to be absent. Often when I have spoken to her she would exclaim, 'Mother, you have disturbed the brightest visions that ever mortal was blessed with! I was in the midst of such scenes of delight! Cannot I have time to finish my dream?' And when I told her how long it was until breakfast, 'It will do, she would say, and again lose herself in her bright imaginings; for I considered these as moments of inspiration rather than sleep. She told me it was not sleep. I never knew but one, except Margaret, who enjoyed this delightful and mysterious source of happiness; that one was her departed sister Lucretia. When awaking from these reveries, an almost ethereal light played about her eye, which seemed to irradiate her whole face. A

holy calm pervaded her manner, and in truth she looked more like an angel who had been communing with kindred spirits in the world of light, than anything of a grosser nature.”

How truly does this correspond with Milton’s exquisite description of the heavenly influences that minister to virgin innocence: —

“A thousand liv’ried angels lackey her,  
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt;  
And in clear dream and solemn vision,  
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;  
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants  
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape.  
The unpolluted temple of the mind,  
And turn it by degrees to the soul’s essence,  
Till all be made immortal.”

Of the images and speculations that floated in her mind during these half-dreams, half-reveries, we may form an idea from the following lines, written on one occasion after what her mother used to term her “descent into the world of reality”: —

#### THE JOYS OF HEAVEN.

Oh, who can tell the joy and peace  
Which souls redeemed shall know,  
When all their earthly sorrows cease.  
Their pride, and pain, and woe!  
Who may describe the matchless love  
Which reigneth with the saints above?

What earthly tongue can ever tell  
The pure, unclouded joy  
Which in each gentle soul doth swell,  
Unmingled with alloy,  
As, bending to the Lord Most High,  
They sound his praises through the sky?

Through the high regions of the air,  
On angel wings they glide,  
And gaze in wondering silence there  
On scenes to us denied;  
Their minds expanding every hour,  
And opening like the summer flower.

Though not like them to fade away,  
To die, and bloom no more;  
Beyond the reach of fell decay  
They stand in light and power;  
But pure, eternal, free from care,  
They join in endless praises there!

When first they leave this world of woe  
For fair, immortal scenes of light,  
Angels attend them from below,  
And upward wing their joyful flight;  
Where, fired with heavenly rapture’s flame,  
They raise on high Jehovah’s name.

O’er the broad arch of heaven it peals,  
While shouts of praise unnumbered flow;  
The full, sweet notes sublimely swell,  
And prostrate angels humbly bow;  
Each harp is tuned to joy above,  
Its theme, a Saviour’s matchless love.

The dulcet voice, which here below  
Charmed with delight each listening ear,  
Mixed with no lingering tone of woe,  
Swelling harmonious, soft, and clear,  
Will sweetly fill the courts above,  
In strains of heavenly peace and love.



The brilliant genius, which on earth  
Is struggling with disease and pain,  
Will there unfold in power and light,  
Naught its bright current to restrain;  
And as each brilliant day rolls on,  
'T will find some grace till then unknown.

And as the countless years flit by,  
Their minds progressing still,  
The more they know, these saints on high  
Praise more His sovereign will;  
No breath from sorrow's whirlwind blast  
Around their footsteps cast.

From their high throne they gaze abroad  
On vast creation's wondrous plan,  
And own the power, the might of God,  
In each resplendent work they scan;  
Though sun and moon to naught return,  
Like stars these souls redeemed shall burn.

Oh I who could wish to stay below,  
If sure of such a home as this,  
Where streams of love serenely flow,  
And every heart is filled with bliss?  
They praise, and worship, and adore  
The Lord of heaven for evermore.

During this dangerous illness she became acquainted with [American novelist] Miss [Catherine] Sedgwick. The first visit of that most excellent and justly distinguished person, was when Margaret was in a state of extreme debility. It laid the foundation of an attachment on the part of the latter which continued until her death. The visit was repeated; a correspondence afterwards took place, and the friendship of Miss Sedgwick became to the little enthusiast a source of the worthiest pride and purest enjoyment throughout the remainder of her brief existence.

At length the violence of her malady gave way to skilful remedies and the most tender and unremitting assiduity. When enabled to leave her chamber, she rallied her spirits, made great exertions to be cheerful, and strove to persuade herself that all might yet be well with her. Even her parents, with that singular self-delusion inseparable from this cruelly flattering malady, began to indulge a trembling hope that she might still be spared to them.

In the month of July, her health being sufficiently reestablished to bear the fatigues of travelling, she was taken by her mother and eldest brother on a tour to Dutchess County and the western part of New York. On leaving home, she wrote the following lines, expressive of the feelings called forth by the events of the few preceding months, and of a foreboding that she should never return: —

#### FAREWELL TO RUREMONT.

Oh! sadly I gaze on this beautiful landscape,  
And silent and slow do the big tear-drops swell;  
And I haste to my task, while the deep sigh is breaking,  
To bid thee, sweet Ruremont, a lasting farewell.

Oh! soft are the breezes which play round thy valley,  
And warm are the sunbeams which gild thee with light;  
All clear and serenely the deep waves are rolling,  
The sky in its radiance is dazzlingly bright.

Oh! gayly the birds 'mid thy dark vines are sporting,  
And, heaven-taught, pouring their gladness in song;  
While the rose and the lily their fair heads are bending  
To hear the soft anthems float gently along.

Fall many an hour have I bent o'er thy waters,  
Or watched the light clouds with a joy-beaming eye.  
Till, delighted, I longed for eagle's swift pinions,  
To pierce the full depths of that beautiful sky.

Though wild were the fancies which dwelt in my bosom,  
Though endless the visions which swept o'er my soul,  
Indulging those dreams was my dearest enjoyment,—

Enjoyment unmingled, unchained by control!

But each garden of earth has a something of sorrow,  
A thorn in its rose, or a blight in its breeze;  
Though blooming as Eden, a shadow hangs o'er thee,  
The spirit of darkness, of pain, of disease!

Yes, Ruremont! thy brow, in its loveliness decked,  
Is entwined with a fatal but beautiful wreath;  
For thy green leaves, have shrunk at the mourner's cold touch.  
And thy pale flowers have wept in the presence of death.

Yon violets, which bloom in their delicate freshness,  
Were strewed o'er the grave of our fairest and best;  
Yon roses, which charm by their richness and fragrance,  
Have withered and died on his icy-cold breast.

The soft voice of Spring had just breathed o'er the valley,  
The sweet birds just carolled their song in her bower,  
When the angel of Death in his terror swept o'er us,  
And placed in his bosom our fragile young flower.

Thus, Ruremont, we mourn not thy beauties alone,  
Thy flowers in their freshness, thy stream in its pride;  
But we leave the loved scene of our mourning and tears, —  
We leave the dear spot where our cherished one died.

The mantle of beauty thrown gracefully o'er thee  
Must touch a soft chord in each delicate heart;  
But the tie is more sacred which bids us deplore thee, —  
Endeared by affliction, 't is harder to part.

The scene of enjoyment is ever most lovely,  
Where blissful young spirits dance mirthful and glad;  
But when Sorrow has mingled her tears with our pleasure,  
Our love is more tender, our parting more sad.

How mild is the wing of this delicate zephyr,  
Which fans in its coolness my feverish brow!  
But that light wing is laden with breezes that wither,  
And check the warm current of life in its flow.

Why blight such an Eden, O spirit of terror!  
Which sweetest thy thousands each hour to the tomb?  
Why, why shouldst thou roam o'er this beautiful valley,  
And mingle thy breath with the rose's perfume?

The sun rises bright o'er the clear dancing waters,  
And tinges with gold every light waving tree,  
And the young birds are singing their welcome to morning —  
Alas! they will sing it no longer for me!

The young buds of Summer their soft eyes are opening,  
The wild flowers are bending the pure ripples o'er;  
But I bid them farewell, and my heart is nigh breaking  
To think I shall see them and tend them no more.

I mark yonder path, where so often I 've wandered,  
Yon moss-covered rock, with its sheltering tree,  
And a sigh of deep sadness bursts forth to remember  
That no more its soft verdure shall blossom for me.

How often my thoughts, to these loved scenes returning,  
Shall brood o'er the past with its joy and its pain;  
Till waking at last from the long, pleasing slumber,  
I sigh to behold thee, thus blooming, again.

The little party was absent on its western tour about two months. "Margaret," says her mother, "appeared to enjoy the scenery, and everything during the journey interested her: but there was a sadness in her countenance, a pensiveness in her manner, unless excited by external circumstances, which deeply affected me. She watched every

variation in my countenance; marked every little attention directed to herself, — such as an alteration in her diet, dress, exposure to the changes of weather, — yet still discovered an unwillingness to speak of her declining health, and labored to conceal every unfavorable symptom or change for the worse. This, of course, imposed upon me the most painful restraint. How heart-breaking to find that she considered my tongue as the herald of mournful tidings, and my face as the mirror of evil to come! How true that self-deception seems to be an almost invariable symptom attending this dreadful complaint! Margaret, all unconscious of the rapid strides of the destroyer, taught herself to believe that the alarming symptoms of her case existed only in the imagination of her too anxious mother. Yet knowing my experience in these matters, she still doubted and trembled and feared to ask, lest a confirmation of her vague apprehensions should be the result. She avoided the slightest allusion to the subject of her disease in any way; and in the morbid excitement of her mind it appeared to her almost like accusing her of something wrong to say she was not well.”

The following letter was written by her to Miss Sedgwick, after her arrival in Dutchess County : —

Lithgow, Dutchess County.

Happy as I am, my dear madam, in the privilege of writing to you, I cannot permit another day to pass ere I inform you of our safe arrival at one of the most lovely spots in this beautiful and healthy country. Our passage up the river was rather tedious, being debarred the pleasure of remaining upon deck, but this privation was counterbalanced by the pleasure of a few moments' conversation with dear brother, who was permitted to meet us when the boat stopped at West Point. Arrived at Poughkeepsie, brother M. procured a private carriage, which was to convey us to the end of our journey, a distance of twenty miles. The drive was delightful! The scenery ever changing, ever beautiful! We arrived at Lithgow without much fatigue, where a hearty welcome, that sweetest of cordials, was awaiting us. Oh, it is a lovely spot! I thought Ruremont the perfection of beauty! but here I find the flowers as blooming, the birds as gay, the air as sweet, and the prospect far more varied and extensive. 'T is true we have lost the beautiful East River, with its crowd of vessels sweeping gracefully along; but here are hills crowned with the richest foliage, valleys sprinkled with flowers, and watered with winding rivulets; and here, what we prize more than all, a mild, salubrious air, which seems, in the words of the divine poet, 'to bear healing in its wings.' Dear mother bore the fatigue of our journey better than we anticipated; and although I do not think she is permanently better, she certainly breathes more freely, and seems altogether more comfortable, than when in the city. Oh! how sincerely I hope that a change of air and scene may raise her spirits and renovate her strength. She is now in the midst of friends whom she has known and loved for many years, and surrounded by scenes connected with many of her earliest remembrances. Farewell, my dear madam! Please give my love to your dear little niece; and should you have the leisure and inclination to answer this, believe me your letter will be a source of much gratification to your

Highly obliged little friend,

M. M. Davidson.

Miss Catherine Sedgwick. August. 1836.

The travellers returned to Ruremont in September. The tour had been of service to Margaret, and she endeavored to persuade herself that she was quite well. If asked about her health, her reply was, that "If her friends did not tell her she was ill, she should not, from her own feelings, suspect it." That she was, notwithstanding, dubious on this subject, was evident from her avoiding to speak about it, and from the uneasiness she manifested when it was alluded to. It was still more evident from the change that took place in her habits and pursuits; she tacitly adopted the course of conduct that had repeatedly and anxiously, but too often vainly, been urged by her mother, as calculated to allay the morbid irritability of her system. She gave up her studies, rarely indulged in writing or drawing, and contented herself with light reading, with playing a few simple airs on the piano, and with any other trivial mode of passing away the time. The want of her favorite occupations, however, soon made the hours move heavily with her. Above all things, she missed the exacting exercise of the pen, against which she had been especially warned. Her mother observed the listlessness and melancholy that were stealing over her, and hoped a change of scene might banish them. The airs from the river, too, had been pronounced unfavorable to her health; the family, therefore, removed to town. The change of residence, however, did not produce the desired effect. She became more and more dissatisfied with herself, and with the life of idleness, as she considered it, that she was leading; but still she had resolved to give the prescribed system a thorough trial. A new source of solicitude was now awakened in the bosom of her anxious mother, who read in her mournfully quiet manner and submissive silence the painful effects of compliance with her advice. There was not a murmur, however, from the lips of Margaret, to give rise to this solicitude; on the contrary, whenever she caught her mother's eye fixed anxiously and inquiringly on her, she would turn away and assume an air of cheerfulness.

Six months had passed in this inactive manner. "She was seated one day by my side," says Mrs. Davidson, "weary and restless, and scarcely knowing what to do with herself, when, marking the traces of grief upon my face, she threw her arms about my neck, and, kissing me, exclaimed, 'My dear, dear mother!' 'What is it affects you now, my child?' 'Oh, I know you are longing for something from my pen!' I saw the secret craving of the spirit that gave rise to the suggestion. 'I do, indeed, my dear, delight in the effusions from your pen, but the exertion will injure you.' 'Mamma, I must write! I can hold out no longer! I will return to my pen, my pencil, and my books, and shall again be happy!' I pressed her to my bosom, and cautioned her to remember she was feeble. 'Mother,' exclaimed she, 'I am well! I wish you were only as well as I am!'"

The heart of the mother was not proof against these appeals, indeed she had almost as much need of self-denial on this subject as her child, so much did she delight in these early blossomings of her talent. Margaret was again left to her own impulses. All the frivolous expedients for what is usually termed killing time were discarded by her with contempt; her studies were resumed; in the sacred writings and in the pages of history she sought fitting aliment for her mind, half famished by its long abstinence; her poetical vein again burst forth, and the following lines, written at the time, show the excitement and elevation of her feelings: —

EARTH.

Earth! thou hast naught to satisfy  
The cravings of immortal mind!  
Earth! thou hast nothing pure and high.  
The soaring, struggling soul to bind.

Impatient of its long delay,  
The pinioned spirit fain would roam,  
And leave this crumbling house of clay,  
To seek, above, its own bright home!

The spirit, — 't is a spark of light  
Struck from our God's eternal throne,  
Which pierces through these clouds of night,  
And longs to shine where once it shone!

Earth! there will come an awful day,  
When thou shalt crumble into naught;  
When thou shalt melt beneath that ray  
From whence thy splendors first were caught

Quenched in the glories of its God,  
Yon burning lamp shall then expire;  
And flames, from heaven's own altar sent,  
Shall light the great funereal pyre.  
Yes, thou must die! and yon pure depths  
Back from thy darkened brow shall roll;  
But never can the tyrant Death  
Arrest this feeble, trusting soul.

When that great Voice, which formed thee first  
Shall tell, surrounding world, thy doom,  
Then the pure soul, enchained by thee,  
Shall rise triumphant o'er thy tomb.

Then on, still on, the unfettered mind  
Through realms of endless space shall fly;  
No earth to dim, no chain to bind,  
Too pure to sin, too great to die.

Earth! thou hast naught to satisfy  
The cravings of immortal mind!  
Earth! thou hast nothing pure or high,  
The soaring, struggling soul to hind.

Yet is this never-dying ray  
Caught in thy cold, delusive snares,  
Cased in a cell of mouldering clay,  
And bowed by woes, and pain, and cares I

Oh! how mysterious is the bond  
Which blends the earthly with the pure,  
And mingles that which death may blight  
With that which ever must endure!

Arise, my soul, from all below,  
And gaze upon thy destined home,  
The heaven of heavens, the throne of God,  
Where sin and care can never come.

Prepare thee for a state of bliss,  
Unclouded by this mortal veil,  
Where thou shalt see thy Maker's face,  
And dews from heaven's own air inhale.

How sadly do the sins of earth  
Deface thy purity and light,  
That thus, while gazing at thyself,

Thou shrink'st in horror at the sight.

Compound of weakness and of strength,  
Mighty, yet ignorant of thy power!  
Loftier than earth, or air, or sea,  
Yet meaner than the lowliest flower!

Soaring towards heaven, yet clinging still  
To earth, by many a purer tie!  
Longing to breathe a tender air,  
Yet fearing, trembling thus to die!

She was soon all cheerfulness and enjoyment. Her pen and her pencil were frequently in her hand; she occupied herself also with her needle in embroidery on canvas, and other fancy work. Hope brightened with the exhilaration of her spirits. "I now walk and ride, eat and sleep as usual," she observes in a letter to a young friend, "and although not well, have strong hopes that the opening spring, which renovates the flowers, and fields, and streams, will revive my enfeebled frame, and restore me to my wonted health." In these moods she was the life of the domestic circle, and these moods were frequent and long. And here we would observe, that though these memoirs, which are furnished principally from the recollections of an afflicted mother, may too often represent this gifted little being as a feeble invalid struggling with mortality, yet in truth her life, though a brief, was a bright and happy one. At times she was full of playful and innocent gayety; at others of intense mental exaltation; and it was the very intensity of her enjoyment that made her so often indulge in those poetic paroxysms, if we may be allowed the expression, which filled her mother with alarm. A few weeks of this intellectual excitement was followed by another rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs, and a long interval of extreme debility. The succeeding winter was one of vicissitude. She had several attacks of bleeding at the lungs, which evidently alarmed her at the time, though she said nothing, and endeavored to repress all manifestation of her feelings. If taken suddenly, she instantly resorted to the sofa, and, by a strong effort, strove to suppress every emotion. With her eyes closed, her lips compressed, and her thin pale hand resting in that of her anxious mother, she seemed to be waiting the issue. Not a murmur would escape her lips, nor did she ever complain of pain. She would often say, by way of consolation, to her mother, "Mamma, I am highly favored. I hardly know what is meant by pain. I am sure I never, to my recollection, have felt it." The moment she was able to sit up, after one of these alarming attacks, every vestige of a sick-chamber must be removed. No medicine, no cap, no bed-gown, no loose wrapper must be in sight. Her beautiful dark hair must be parted on her broad, high forehead, her dress arranged with the same care and neatness as when in perfect health; indeed she studied to banish from her appearance all that might remind her friends that her health was impaired, and, if possible, to drive the idea from her own thoughts. Her reply to every inquiry about her health was, "Well, quite well; or at least / feel so, though mother continues to treat me as an invalid. True I have a cold, attended by a cough, that is not willing to leave me; but when the spring returns, with its mild air and sweet blossoms, I think this cough, which alarms mother so much, will leave me."

She had, indeed, a strong desire to live; and the cause of that desire is indicative of her character. With all her retiring modesty, she had an ardent desire for literary distinction. The example of her sister Lucretia was incessantly before her; she was her leading star, and her whole soul was but to emulate her soarings into the pure regions of poetry. Her apprehensions were that she might be cut off in the immaturity of her powers. A simple, but most touching ejaculation, betrayed this feeling, as, when lying on a sofa, in one of those alarming paroxysms of her malady, she turned her eyes, full of mournful sweetness, upon her mother, and, in a low, subdued voice, exclaimed, "Oh! my dear, dear mother! I am so young!"

We have said that the example of her sister Lucretia was incessantly before her, and no better proof can be given of it than in the following lines, written at this time, which breathe the heavenly aspirations of her pure young spirit, in strains, to us, quite unearthly. We may have read poetry more artificially perfect in its structure, but never any more truly divine in its inspiration.

TO MY SISTER LUCRETIA.

My sister! With that thrilling word  
What thoughts unnumbered wildly spring!  
What echoes in my heart are stirred,  
While thus I touch the trembling string!

My sister! ere this youthful mind  
Could feel the value of thine own;  
Ere this infantine heart could bind,  
In its deep cell, one look, one tone,

To glide along on memory's stream,  
And bring back thrilling thoughts of thee;  
Ere I knew aught but childhood's dream,  
Thy soul had struggled, and was free!

My sister! with this mortal eye  
I ne'er shall see thy form again;

And never shall this mortal ear  
Drink in the sweetness of thy strain!

Yet fancy wild and glowing love  
Reveal thee to my spirit's view,  
Enwreathed with graces from above,  
And decked in heaven's own fadeless hue.

Thy glance of pure seraphic light  
Sheds o'er my heart its soft'ning ray;  
Thy pinions guard my couch by night,  
And hover o'er my path by day.

I cannot weep that thou art fled;  
For ever blends my soul with thine,  
Each thought, by purer impulse led,  
Is soaring on to realms divine.

Thy glance unfolds my heart of hearts.  
And lays its inmost recess bare;  
Thy voice a heavenly calm imparts,  
And soothes each wilder passion there.

I hear thee in the summer breeze,  
See thee in all that's pure or fair;  
Thy whisper in the murmuring trees,  
Thy breath, thy spirit everywhere.

Thine eyes, which watch when mortals sleep,  
Cast o'er my dreams a radiant hue;  
Thy tears, "such tears as angels weep,"  
Fall nightly with the glistening dew.

Thy fingers wake my youthful lyre,  
And teach its softer strains to flow;  
Thy spirit checks each vain desire,  
And gilds the low'ring brow of woe.

When fancy wings her upward Sight  
On through the viewless realms of air,  
Clothed in its robe of matchless light,  
I view thy ransomed spirit there!

Far from her wild delusive dreams,  
It leads my raptured soul away,  
Where the pure fount of glory streams,  
And saints live on through endless day.

When the dim lamp of future years  
Sheds o'er my path its glimmering faint.  
First in the view thy form appears,  
My sister, and my guardian saint!

Thou gem of light! my leading star!  
What thou hast been, I strive to be;  
When from the path I wander far,  
Oh, turn thy guiding beam on me.

Teach me to fill thy place below,  
That I may dwell with thee above;  
To soothe, like thee, a mother's woe,  
And prove, like thine, a sister's love.

Thou wert unfit to dwell with clay,  
For sin too pure, for earth too bright!  
And Death, who called thee hence away  
Placed on his brow a gem of light!

A gem, whose brilliant glow is shed  
Beyond the ocean's swelling wave

Which gilds the memory of the dead,  
And pours its radiance on thy grave

When Day hath left his glowing car,  
And Evening spreads her robe of love;  
When worlds, like travellers from afar,  
Meet in the azure fields above;

When all is still, and Fancy's realm  
Is opening to the eager view,  
Mine eye full oft, in search of thee,  
Roams o'er that vast expanse of blue

I know that here thy harp is mute,  
And quenched the bright poetic fire,  
Yet still I bend my ear, to catch  
The hymnings of thy seraph lyre.

Oh! if this partial converse now  
So joyous to my heart can be,  
Must the streams of rapture flow  
When both are chainless, both are free!

When borne from earth for evermore,  
Our souls in sacred joy unite,  
At God's almighty throne adore,  
And bathe in beams of endless light!

Away, away, ecstatic dream!  
I must not, dare not dwell on thee;  
My soul, immersed in life's dark stream,  
Is far too earthly to be free.

Though heaven's bright portal were unclosed,  
And angels wooed me from on high,  
Too much I fear my shrinking soul  
Would cast on earth its longing eye.

Teach me to fill thy place below,  
That I may dwell with thee above;  
To soothe, like thee, a mother's woe,  
And prove, like thee, a sister's love.

It was probably this trembling solicitude about the duration of her existence that made her so anxious, about this time, to employ every interval of her precarious health in the cultivation of her mental powers. Certain it is, during the winter, checkered as it was with repeated fits of indisposition, she applied herself to historical and other studies with an ardor that often made her mother tremble for the consequences.

The following letters to a young female friend were written during one of these intervals: —

“New York, February 26, 1837.

“Notwithstanding all the dangers which might have befallen your letter, my dear Henrietta, it arrived safely at its resting-place, and is now lying open before me, as I am quietly sitting, this chill February morning, to inform you of its safe arrival. I find I was not mistaken in believing you too kind to be displeased at my remissness; and I now hope that through our continued intercourse neither will have cause to complain of the other's negligence.

“For my own part, I am always willing to assign every reason but that of forgetfulness for a friend's silence. Knowing how often I am obliged to claim this indulgence for myself, and how often ill health prevents me from writing to those I love, I am the more ready to frame apologies for others; indeed I think this spirit of charity (if so I may call it) is necessary to the happiness of correspondents, and as I am sure you possess it, I trust we shall both glide quietly along without any of those little jars which so often interrupt the purest friendships. And now that my dissertation on letter-writing is at an end, I must proceed to inform you of what I fear will be a disappointment, as it breaks away all those sweet anticipations expressed in your affectionate letter. Father has concluded that we shall not return to Plattsburg next spring, as he had once intended; he fears the effects of the cold winds of Lake Champlain upon mother and myself, who are both delicate; and as we have so many dear friends in and about the city, a nearer location would be pleasanter to us and to them. We now think seriously of returning to Ballston, that beautiful little village where we have already spent two delightful years; and though in this case I must relinquish the idea of visiting my dear ‘old home’ and my dear young friend, hope points to the hour when you may become my guest, and where the charms of novelty will in some degree repay us for the delightful associations and remembrances we had hoped to enjoy. But I cannot help now and then casting a

backward glance upon the beautiful scenes you describe, and wishing myself with you. A philosopher would say, 'Since you cannot enjoy what you desire, turn to the pleasures you may possess, and seek in them consolation for what you have lost;' but I am no philosopher...

"I will endeavor to answer your question about Mrs. Hemans. I have read several lives of this distinguished poetess, by different authors, and in all of them find something new to admire in her character and venerate in her genius! She was a woman of deep feeling, lively fancy, and acute sensibilities; so acute, indeed, as to have formed her chief unhappiness through life. She mingles her own feelings with her poems so well, that in reading them you read her character. But there is one thing I have often remarked: the mind soon wearies in perusing many of her pieces at once. She expresses those sweet sentiments so often, and introduces the same stream of beautiful ideas so constantly, that they sometimes degenerate into monotony. I know of no higher treat than to read a few of her best productions, and comment upon and feel their beauties; but perusing her volume is to me like listening to a strain of sweet music repeated over and over again, until it becomes so familiar to the ear, that it loses the charm of variety.

"Now, dear H., is not this presumption in me, to criticize so exquisite an author? But you desired my opinion, and I have given it to you without reserve.

"You desire me to send you an original poem for yourself. Now, my dear Hetty, this is something I am not at present able to do for any of my friends, writing being supposed quite injurious to persons with weak lungs. And I have still another reason. You say the effect of conveying feelings from the heart and recording them upon paper, seems to deprive them of half their warmth and ardor! Now, my dear friend, would not the effect of forming them into verse seem to render them still less sincere? Is not plain prose, as it slides rapidly from the pen, more apt to speak the feelings of the heart, than when an hour or two is spent in giving them rhyme and measure and all the attributes of poetry?"...

TO THE SAME.

"New York, April 2, 1837.

"About an hour since, my dear Henrietta, I received your token of remembrance, and commenced my answer with an act of obedience to your sovereign will; but I fear you will repent when too late, and while nodding over the closely written sheet, and peering impatiently into each crowded corner, you will secretly wish you had allowed my pen to commence its operations at a more respectful distance from the top of the page. However, the request was your own; I obey like an obedient friend, and you must abide the consequences of your rash demand. Should the first glance at my well-filled sheet be followed by a *yawn*, or its last word be welcomed with a smile, you must blame your own imprudence in bringing down upon your luckless head the accumulated nothings of a scribbler like myself. It is indeed true that we shall not return to Plattsburg; and much as I long to revisit the home of my infancy, and the friends of my earliest remembrance, I shall be obliged to relinquish the pleasure in reality, though fancy, unshackled by earth, shall direct her pinions to the north, and linger, delighted, on the beautiful banks of the Champlain! Methinks I hear you exclaim, with impatience, '*Fancy!* what is it? I long for something more substantial.' So do I, *ma chere*, but since I cannot hope to behold my dear native village and its dear inhabitants, with *other* eyes than those of fancy, I will e'en employ them to the best of my ability. You may be sure we do not prefer the confined and murky atmosphere of the city to the pure and health-giving breezes of the country; far from it — we are already preparing to remove, as soon as the mild influence of spring has prevailed over the chilling blasts which we still hear whistling around us; and gladly shall we welcome the day that will release us from our bondage. But there is some drawback to every pleasure — some bitter drop in almost every cup of enjoyment; and we shall taste this most keenly when we bid farewell to the delightful circle of friends who have cheered us during the solitude and confinement of this dreary winter. The New York air, so far from agreeing with us, has deprived us of every enjoyment beyond the boundaries of our own walls, and it will be hard to leave those friends who have taught us to forget the privations of ill health in the pleasure of their society. We have chosen Ballston for our temporary home, from the hope of seeing them oftener there than we could in a secluded town, and because pure air, medicinal waters, and good society have all combined to render it a delightful country residence; yet, with all these advantages, is can never possess half the charms of my dear old home!

"That dear old home, where passed my childish years,  
When fond affection wiped my infant tears!  
Where first I learned from whence my blessings came,  
And lisped, in faltering tones, a mother's name!

"That dear old home, where memory fondly clings,  
Where eager fancy spreads her soaring wings;  
Around whose scenes my thoughts delight to stray,  
And pass the hours in pleasing dreams away!

"Oh, shall I ne'er behold thy waves again,  
My native lake, my beautiful Champlain?  
Shall I no more above thy ripples bend  
In sweet communion with my childhood's friend?

"Shall I no more behold thy rolling wave,  
The patriot's cradle [sic], and the warrior's grave?  
Thy mountains, tinged with daylight's paring glow?



Thy islets, mirror'd in the stream below?

"Back! back! — thou present, robed in shadows lie,  
And rise, thou past, before my raptured eye!  
Fancy shall gild the frowning lapse between,  
And Memory's hand shall paint the glowing scene!

"Lo! how the view beneath her pencil grows!  
The flow'ret blooms, the winding streamlet flows;  
With former friends I trace my footsteps o'er,  
And muse, delighted, on my own green shore!

"Alas! it fades — the fairy dream is past!  
Dissolved the veil by sportive Fancy cast.  
Oh, why should thus Out brightest dreams depart,  
And scenes illusive cheat the longing heart?

"Where'er through future life my steps may roam,  
I ne'er shall find a spot like thee, my home;  
With all my joys the thought of thee shall blend,  
And, joined with thee, shall rise my childhood's friend.

"Mother is most truly alive to all these feelings. During our first year in New York we were living a few miles from the city, at one of the loveliest situations in the world! I think I have seldom seen a sweeter spot; but all its beauties could not divert her thoughts from our own dear home, and despite the superior advantages we there enjoyed, she wept to enjoy it again. But enough of this ; if I suffer my fancy to dwell longer upon these loved scenes, I shall scribble over my whole sheet, and, leaving out what I most wish to say, fill it with nothing but 'Home, home, sweet, sweet home!' as the song goes...

"June, 1837.

"Now for the mighty theme upon which I scarcely dare to dwell, — my visit to Plattsburg! Yes, my dear H., I do think, or rather I do *hope*, that such a time may come when I can at least spend a week with you. I dare not hope for a longer time, for I know I shall be disappointed. About the middle of this month brother graduates, and will leave West Point for home. He intends to visit Plattsburg, and it will take much to wean me from my favorite plan of accompanying him. However, all is uncertain, — I must not think of it too much, — but if I do come, it will be with the hope of gaining a still greater pleasure. We are now delightfully situated. Can you not return with me, and make me a visit? What joy is like the joy of anticipation? What pleasure like those we look forward to, through a long lapse of time, and dwell upon as some bright land that we shall inhabit when the *present* shall have become the *past*? I have heard it observed that it was foolish to anticipate — that it was only increasing the pangs of disappointment. Not so; do we not, in our most sanguine hopes, acknowledge to ourselves a fear, a doubt, an expectation of disappointment? Shall we lose the enjoyment of the present, because evil may come in future? No, no — if anticipation was not meant for a solace, an alleviation of the sorrows of life, would it have been so strongly implanted in our hearts by the great Director of all our passions? No — it is too precious! I would give up half the *reality* of joy for the sweet anticipation. Stop — I have gone too far — for indeed I could not resign my visit to you, though I might hope and anticipate for years!

"Just as I had written the above, father interrupted me with an invitation to ride. We have just returned from a long, delightful drive. Though Ballston cannot compare with Plattsburg for its rich and varied scenery, still there are romantic woods and shady paths which cannot fail to delight the true lover of Nature...

"So you do have the blues, eh? I had almost said I was glad of it; but that would be too cruel —, I will only say, one does not like to be alone, or in anything singular, and I too, once in a while, receive a visit from these provoking imps—are they not? You should not have blamed Scott only, (excuse me,) but yourself, for selecting such a book to chase away melancholy.

"You ask me if I remember those *story-telling* days? Indeed I do, and nothing affords me more pleasure than the recollection of those happy hours! If my memory could only retain the particulars of my last story, gladly would I resume and continue it when I meet you again. I will ease your heart of its fear for *mine* — your scolding did not break it. My dear H., it is not made of such brittle materials as to crack for a trifle. No, no! It would be far more prudent to save it entire for some greater occasion, and then make the crash as loud as possible — don't you think so? Oh, nonsensical nonsense! Well —

'The greatest and the wisest men  
Will fool a little now and then.'

But I believe I will not add another word, lest my pen should slide off into some new absurdity."

On the 1st of May, 1837, the family left New York for Ballston. They had scarce reached there when Mrs. Davidson had an attack of inflammatory rheumatism, which confined her to her bed, and rendered her helpless as an infant. It was Margaret's turn now to play the nurse, which she did with the most tender assiduity. The paroxysms of her mother's

complaint were at first really alarming, as may be seen by the following extract of a letter from Margaret to Miss Sedgwick, written some short time afterwards: —

“We at first thought she would never revive. It was indeed a dreadful hour, my dear madam — a sad trial for poor father and myself, to watch, as we supposed, the last agonies of one so beloved as my dear mother! But the cloud has passed by, and my heart, relieved from its burden, is filled, almost to overflowing, with gratitude and joy. After a few hours of dreadful suspense, reaction took place, and since then she has been slowly and steadily improving. In a few days, I hope, she will be able to ride, and breathe some of this delightful air, which cannot fail to invigorate and restore her. My own health has improved astonishingly since my coming here. I walk, and ride, and exercise as much as possible in the open air, and find it of great service to me. Oh, how much I hope to see you here!...Do, if possible, try the Ballston air once more. It has been useful to you once, it might be still more so now. You will find warm hearts to welcome you, and we will do all in our power to make your visit pleasant to you. The country does indeed look beautiful! The woods are teeming with wild flowers, and the air is full of melody. The soft, wild warbling of the birds is far more sweet to me than the most labored performances of art; they may weary by repetition, but what heart can resist the influence of a lovely day ushered in by the morning song of those sweet carollers! and even to sleep, as it were, by their melodious evening strain! How wish you could be here to enjoy it with me.”

The summer of 1837 was one of the happiest of her fleeting existence. For some time after the family removed to Ballston she was very much confined to the house by the illness of her mother, and the want of a proper female companion to accompany her abroad. At length a Mr. and Mrs. H., estimable and intimate friends, of a highly intellectual character, came to the village. Their society was an invaluable acquisition to Margaret. In company with them she was enabled to enjoy the healthful recreations of the country; to ramble in the woods; to take exercise on horseback, of which she was extremely fond, and to make excursions about the neighborhood; while they exerted a guardian care to prevent her, in her enthusiastic love for rural scenery, from exposing herself to anything detrimental to her health and strength. She gave herself up, for a time, to these exhilarating exercises, abstaining from her usual propensity to overtask her intellect; for she had imbibed the idea that active habits, cheerful recreations, and a holiday frame of mind would effectually reestablish her health. As usual, in her excited moods, she occasionally carried these really healthful practices to excess, and would often, says her mother, engage, with a palpitating heart and a pulse beating at the rate of one hundred and thirty in a minute, in all the exercises usually prescribed to *preserve* health in those who are in full possession of the blessing. She was admonished of her danger by several attacks upon her lungs during the summer, but as they were of short duration she still flattered herself that she was getting well. There seemed to be almost an infatuation in her case. The exhilaration of her spirits was at times so great as almost to overpower her. Often would she stand by the window admiring a glorious sunset, until she would be raised into a kind of ecstasy; her eye would kindle; a crimson glow would mount into her cheek, and she would indulge in some of her reveries about the glories of heaven and the spirits of her deceased sisters, partly uttering her fancies aloud, until turning and catching her mother's eye fixed painfully upon her, she would throw her arms round her neck, kiss away her tears, and sink exhausted on her bosom. The excitement over, she would resume her calmness, and converse on general topics. Among her writings are fragments hastily scrawled down at this time, showing the vague aspirations of her spirit, and her vain attempts to grasp those shadowy images that sometimes flit across the poetic mind.

“Oh, for a something more than this,  
To fill the void within my breast;  
A sweet reality of bliss,  
A something bright, but unexpressed.

My spirit longs for something higher  
Than life's dull stream can e'er supply;  
Something to feed this inward fire,  
This spark, which never more can die.

I'd hold companionship with all  
Of pure, of noble, or divine;  
With glowing heart adoring fall,  
And kneel at Nature's sylvan shrine.

My soul is like a broken lyre,  
Whose loudest, sweetest chord is gone;  
A note, half trembling on the wire —  
A heart that wants an echoing tone.

When shall I find this shadowy bliss,  
This shapeless phantom of the mind?  
This something words can ne'er express,  
So vague, so faint, so undefined?

Language! thou never canst portray  
The fancies floating o'er my soul!  
Thou ne'er canst chase the clouds away  
Which o'er my changing visions roll!

And again —

"Oh, I have gazed on forms of light,  
Till life seemed ebbing in a tear —  
Till in that fleeting space of sight  
Were merged the feelings of a year.

And I have heard the voice of song,  
Till my full heart gushed wild and free,  
And my rapt soul would float along  
As if on waves of melody.

But while I glowed at beauty's glance,  
I longed to feel a deeper thrill;  
And while I heard that dying strain,  
I sighed for something sweeter still.

I have been happy, and my soul  
Free from each sorrow, care, regret;  
Yet even in these hours of bliss  
I longed to find them happier yet.

Oft o'er the darkness of my mind  
Some meteor thought has glanced at will;  
'T was bright— but ever have I sighed  
To find a fancy brighter still.

Why are these restless, vain desires,  
Which always grasp at something more,  
To feed the spirit's hidden fires,  
Which burn unseen — unnoticed soar?

Well might the heathen sage have known  
That earth must fail the soul to bind;  
That life, and life's tame joys, alone  
Could never chain the ethereal mind."

The above, as we have before observed, are mere fragments, unfinished and uncorrected, and some of the verses have a vagueness incident to the mood of mind in which they were conceived and the haste with which they were penned; but in these lofty, indefinite aspirations of a young, half-schooled, and inexperienced mind, we see the early and impatient flutterings of a poetical genius, which, if spared, might have soared to the highest regions.

In a letter written to Miss Sedgwick during the autumn, she speaks of her health as having rapidly improved. "I am no longer afflicted by the cough, and mother feels it unnecessary now to speak to me as being ill; though my health is, and probably always will be, very delicate." — "And she really did appear better," observes her mother, "and even I, who had ever been nervously alive to every symptom of her disease, was deluded by those favorable appearances, and began to entertain a hope that she might yet recover, when another sudden attack of bleeding at the lungs convinced us of the fallacy of our hopes, and warned us to take every measure to ward off the severity of the climate in the coming winter. A consultation was held between her father and our favorite physician, and the result was that she was to keep within doors. This was indeed sad, but, after an evident struggle with her own mind, she submitted, with her accustomed good sense, to the decree. All that affection could suggest was done, to prevent the effects of this seclusion on her spirits." A cheerful room was allotted to her, commanding an agreeable prospect, and communicating, by folding doors, to a commodious parlor; the temperature of the whole apartment was regulated by a thermometer. Hither her books, writing-table, drawing implements, and fancy work were transported. When once established in these winter-quarters, she became contented and cheerful. "She read and wrote," says her mother, "and amused herself with drawing and needle-work. After spending as much time as I dare permit in the more serious studies in which she was engaged, she would unbend her mind with one of Scott's delightful novels, or play with her kitten; and at evening we were usually joined by our interesting friends, Mr. and Mrs. H. It is now a melancholy satisfaction to me to believe that she could not, in her state of health, be happier or more pleasantly situated. She was always charmed with the conversation of Mr. H, and followed him through all the mazes of philosophy with the greatest delight. She read Cousin with a high zest, and produced an abstract from it which gave a convincing proof that she understood the principles there laid down; after which she gave a complete analysis of the 'Introduction to the History of Philosophy,' by the same author. Her mind must have been deeply engrossed by these studies, yet it was not visible from her manner. During this short winter she accomplished what to many would have been the labor of years, yet there was no haste, no flurry; she pursued quietly her round of occupations, always cheerful. The hours flew swiftly by; not a moment lagged. I think she never spent a more happy winter than this, with all its varied employments."

The following extract from a letter to one of her young friends, gives an idea of her course of reading during this winter; and how, in her precocious mind, the playfulness of the child mingled with the thoughtfulness of the woman:

---

“You ask me what I am reading. Alas! book-worm as I am, it makes me draw a long breath to contemplate the books I have laid out for perusal. In the first place, I am reading ‘Condillac’s Ancient History,’ in French, twenty-four volumes; ‘Gibbon’s Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,’ in four large volumes. I have not quite finished ‘Josephus.’ In my moments of recreation I am poring over Scott’s bewitching novels. I wish we could give them some other name instead of novels, for they certainly should not bear the same title with the thousand and one productions of that class daily swarming from the press. Do you think they ought? So pure, so pathetic, so historical, and, above all, so true to human nature! How beautifully he mingles the sad with the grotesque, in such a manner that the opposite feelings they excite harmonize perfectly with each other. His works can be read over and over again, and every time with a growing sense of their beauties. Do you read French? If so, I wish we could read the same works together. It would be a great pleasure to me at least, and our mutual remarks might benefit each other. Supposing you will be pleased to hear of my amusements, however trifling, I will venture to name one, at the risk of lowering any great opinion you may have formed of my wisdom! A pet kitten! Yes, my dear Henrietta, a sweet little creature, with a graceful shape, playful temper, white breast, and dear little innocent eyes, which completely belie the reputed disposition of a *cat*. He is neither deceitful, ferocious, nor ungrateful, but is certainly the most rational being for an irrational one, I ever saw. He is now snugly lying in my lap, watching every movement of my pen with a quiet purr of contentment. Have you such a pet? I wish you had, that we might both play with them at the same time, sunset, for instance, and while so far distant, feel that we were enjoying ourselves in the selfsame way. You ask what I think of animal magnetism? My dear Hetty, I have not troubled my head about it. I hear of it from every quarter, and mentioned so often with contempt, that I have thought of it only as an absurdity. If I understand it rightly, the leading principle is the influence of one mind upon another; there is undoubtedly such an influence, to a reasonable degree, but as to throwing one into a magnetic sleep — presenting visions before their eyes of scenes passing afar off, it seems almost too ridiculous! Still it may all be *true*! A hundred years since, what would have been our feelings to see what is now here so common, a *steam-engine*, breathing fire and smoke, gliding along with the rapidity of thought, and carrying at its *black heels* a train which a hundred men would fail to move. We know not but this apparent absurdity, this magnetism, may be a great and mysterious secret, which the course of time will reveal and adapt to important purposes...What are you studying? Do you play? Do you draw? Please tell me everything. I wish I could form some picture of you to my mind’s eye. It is so tormenting to correspond with a dear friend, and have no likeness of them in our fancy. I remember everything as it used to be, but time makes great changes! Now here comes my saucy kitten, and springs upon the table before me as if he had a perfect right there. ‘What do you mean, little puss? Come, sit for your portrait.’ I hope, dear H., you will fully appreciate this painting, which I consider as my *chef-d’oeuvre*, and preserve it as a faithful likeness of my inimitable cat. But do forgive me so much nonsense! But I feel that to you I can rattle off anything that comes uppermost. It is near night, and the sun is setting so beautifully after the long storm, that I could not sit here much longer, even if I had a whole page to fill. How splendid the moon must look on the bright waters of the Champlain this night! Good-bye, good-bye — love to all from all, and believe me, now as ever,

“Your sincere friend,  
“Margaret.”

The following passages from her mother’s memorandums touch upon matters of more solemn interest, which occasionally occupied her young mind : —

“During the whole of the preceding summer her mind had dwelt much upon the subject of religion. Much of her time was devoted to serious reflection, self-examination, and prayer. But she evidently shunned all conversation upon the subject. It was a theme she had always conversed upon with pleasure until now. This not only surprised but pained me. I was a silent but close and anxious observer of the operations of her mind, and saw that, with all her apparent cheerfulness she was ill at ease; perfect silence was however maintained on both sides until the winter commenced, and brought us more closely together. Then her young heart again reposed itself, in confiding love, upon the bosom that heretofore had shared its every thought, and the subject became one of daily discussion. I found her mind perplexed and her ideas confused by points of doctrine which she could neither understand nor reconcile with her views of the justice and benevolence of God, as exhibited in the Scriptures. Her views of the Divine character and attributes had ever been of that elevated cast, which, while they raised her mind above all grosser things, sublimated and purified her feelings and desires, and prepared her for that bright and holy communion without which she could enjoy nothing. Her faith was of that character ‘which casteth out fear.’ It was sweet and soothing to depend upon Jesus for salvation. It was delightful to behold, in the all-imposing majesty of God, a kind and tender father, who pitied her infirmities, and on whose justice and benevolence she could rest for time and eternity. She had, during the summer, heard much disputation on the doctrinal points, which she had silently and carefully examined, and had been shocked at the position which many professing Christians had taken; she saw much inconsistency, much bitterness of spirit, on points which she had been taught to consider not essential to salvation; she saw that the spirit of persecution and uncharitableness, which pervaded many classes of Christians, had almost totally destroyed that bond of brotherhood which ought firmly to unite the followers of the humble Saviour; and she could not reconcile these feelings with her ideas of the Christian character. Her meekness and humility led her sometimes to doubt her own state. She felt that her religious duties were but too feebly performed, and that without divine assistance all her resolutions to be more faithful were vain. She often said, ‘Mamma, I am far from right. I resolve and re-resolve, and yet remain the same.’ I had shunned everything that savored of controversy, knowing her enthusiasm and extreme sensibility on the subject of religion; I dreaded the excitement it might create. But I now more fully explained, as well as I was able, the simple and divine truths of the Gospel, and held up to her view the beauty and benevolence of the Father’s character and the unbounded love which could have devised the atoning sacrifice; and advised her at present to avoid controversial writings, and make a more thorough examination of the Scriptures, that she might found her principles upon the evidences to be deduced from that groundwork of our faith, unbiased by the opinions and prejudices of any man. I represented to her, that, young as she was, while in feeble health, researches into those knotty and disputed subjects would only confuse her mind; that there was enough of plain practical religion to be gathered from the Bible; and urged the importance of frequent

and earnest prayer, which, with God's blessing, would compose the agitation of her mind, which I considered as essential to her inward peace."

On one occasion, while perusing Lockhart's "Life of Scott," with great interest, her mother ventured to sound her feelings upon the subject of literary fame, and asked her whether she had no ambition to have her name go down to posterity. She took her mother's hand with enthusiasm, kissed her cheek, and, retiring to the other room, in less than an hour returned with the following lines: —

TO DIE AND BE FORGOTTEN.

A FEW short years will roll along,  
With mingled joy and pain,  
Then shall I pass — a broken tone!  
An echo of a strain!

Then shall I fade away from life,  
Like cloud-tints from the sky,  
When the breeze sweeps their surface o'er  
And they are lost for aye.

The world will laugh, and weep, and sing,  
As gayly as before,  
But cold and silent I shall be —  
As I have been no more.

The haunts I loved, the flowers I nursed  
Will bloom as sweetly still,  
But other hearts and other hands  
My vacant place shall fill.

And even mighty love must fail  
To bind my memory here —  
Like fragrance round the faded rose,  
'T will perish with the year.

The soul may look, with fervent hope,  
To worlds of future bliss;  
But oh, how saddening to the heart  
To be forgot in this!

How many a noble mind hath shrunk  
From death without a name;  
Hath looked beyond his shadowy realm.  
And lived and died for Fame!

Could we not view the darksome grave  
With calmer, steadier eye,  
If conscious that a world's regret  
Would seek us where we lie?

Faith points, with mild, confiding glance,  
To realms of bliss above,  
Where peace and joy and justice reign,  
And never-dying love;

But still our earthly feelings cling  
Around this bounded spot;  
There is a something burns within  
Which will not be forgot.

It cares not for a gorgeous hearse,  
For waving torch and plume;  
For pealing hymn, funereal verse,  
Or richly sculptured tomb;

But it would live undimmed and fresh,  
When flickering life departs;  
Would find a pure and honored grave  
Embalmed in kindred hearts.

Who would not brave a life of tears  
To win an honored name,  
One sweet and heart-awakening tone  
From the silver trump of Fame?

To be, when countless years have past,  
The good man's glowing theme?  
To be — but I — what right have I  
To this bewildering dream?

Oh, it is vain, and worse than vain,  
To dwell on thoughts like these  
I a frail child, whose feeble frame  
Already knows disease!

Who, ere another spring may dawn,  
Another summer bloom,  
May, like the flowers of autumn, lie,  
A tenant of the tomb.

Away, away, presumptuous thought!  
I will not dwell on thee!  
For what, alas! am I to Fame,  
And what is Fame to me?

Let all these wild and longing thoughts  
With the dying year expire,  
And I will nurse within my breast  
A purer, holier fire!

Yes, I will seek my mind to win  
From all these dreams of strife,  
And toil to write my name within  
The glorious Book of Life.

Then shall old Time who, rolling on,  
Impels me towards the tomb,  
Prepare for me a glorious crown,  
Through endless years to bloom.

December, 1837.

The confinement to the house, in a graduated temperature, the round of cheerful occupations, and the unremitting care taken of her, produced a visible melioration of her symptoms. Her cough gradually subsided, the morbid irritability of her system, producing often an unnatural flow of spirits, was quieted; as usual, she looked forward to spring as the genial and delightful season that was to restore her to perfect health and freedom.

Christmas was approaching, which had ever been a time of social enjoyment in the family; as it drew near, however, the remembrance of those lost from the fireside circle was painfully felt by Mrs. Davidson. Margaret saw the gloom on her mother's brow, and, kissing her, exclaimed, "Dear mother, do not let us waste our present happiness in useless repining. You see I am well, and you are more comfortable, and dear father is in good health and spirits. Let us enjoy the present hour, and banish vain regrets!" Having given this wholesome advice, she tripped off with a light step to prepare Christmas presents for the servants, which were to be distributed by St. Nicholas or Santa Clans, in the old traditional way. Every animated being, rational or irrational, must share her liberality on that day of festivity and joy. Her Jenny, a little bay pony on which she had taken many healthful and delightful rides, must have a gayer blanket and an extra allowance of oats. "On Christmas morning," says her mother, "she woke with the first sound of the old house-clock striking the hour of five, and twining her arms round my neck, (for during this winter she shared my bed,) and kissing me again and again, exclaimed, —

'Wake, mother, wake to youthful glee,  
The golden sun is dawning;'

then slipping a piece of paper into my hand, she sprang out of bed, and danced about the carpet, her kitten in her arms, with all the sportive glee of childhood. When I gazed upon her young face, so bright, so animated, and beautiful, beaming with innocence and love, and thought that perhaps this was the last anniversary of her Saviour's birth she might spend on earth, I could not suppress my emotions; I caught her to my bosom in an agony of tenderness, while she, all unconscious of the nature of my feelings, returned my caresses with playful fondness." The following verses were contained in the abovementioned paper:—

TO MY MOTHER AT CHRISTMAS.

Wake, mother, wake to hope and glee,  
The golden sun is dawning!  
Wake, mother, wake, and hail with me  
This happy Christmas morning!

Each eye is bright with pleasure's glow,  
Each lip is laughing merrily;  
A smile hath past o'er Winter's brow,  
And the very snow looks cheerily.

Hark to the voice of the awakened day,  
To the sleigh-bells gayly ringing,  
While a thousand, thousand happy hearts  
Their Christmas lays are singing.

'T is a joyous hour of mirth and love,  
And my heart is overflowing!  
Come, let us raise our thoughts above,  
While pure and fresh and glowing.

'T is the happiest day of the rolling year,  
But it comes in a robe of mourning,  
Nor light, nor life, nor bloom is here  
Its icy shroud adorning.

It comes when all around is dark,  
'T is meet it so should be,  
For its joy is the joy of the happy heart,  
The spirit's jubilee.

It does not need the bloom of Spring,  
Or Summer's light and gladness,  
For Love has spread her beaming wing  
O'er Winter's brow of sadness.

'T was thus he came, beneath a cloud  
His spirit's light concealing,  
No crown of earth, no kingly robe  
His heavenly power revealing.

His soul was pure, his mission love,  
His aim a world's redeeming;  
To raise the darkened soul above  
Its wild and sinful dreaming.

With all his Father's power and love,  
The cords of guilt to sever;  
To ope a sacred fount of light,  
Which flows, shall flow forever.

Then we shall hail the glorious day,  
The spirit's new creation,  
And pour our grateful feelings forth,  
A pure and warm libation.

Wake, mother, wake to chastened joy,  
The golden sun is dawning!  
Wake, mother, wake, and hail with me  
This happy Christmas morning.

"The last day of the year 1837 arrived. 'Mamma,' said she; 'will you sit up with me to-night until after 12?' I looked inquiringly. She replied, 'I wish to bid farewell to the present, and to welcome the coming year.' After the family retired, and we had seated ourselves by a cheerful fire to spend the hours which would intervene until the year 1838 should dawn upon us, she was serious, but not sad, and as if she had nothing more than usual upon her mind, took some light sewing in her hand, and so interested me by her conversation that I scarcely noticed the flight of time. At half-past 11 she handed me a book, pointing to some interesting article to amuse me, then took her seat at the writing-table, and composed the piece on the departure of the old year 1837 and the commencement of the new one 1838. When she had finished the Farewell, except the last verse, it wanted a few minutes of 12. She rested her arms in silence upon the table, apparently

absorbed in meditation. The clock struck — a sort of deep thought passed over her expressive face — she remained solemn and silent until the last tone had ceased to vibrate, when she again resumed her pen and wrote. The bell hath ceased. When the clock struck, I arose from my seat and stood leaning over the back of her chair, with a mind deeply solemnized by a scene so new and interesting. The words flowed rapidly from her pen, without haste or confusion, and at 1 o'clock we were quietly in bed."

We again subjoin the poem alluded to, trusting that these effusions, which are so intimately connected with her personal history, will be read with greater interest when given in conjunction with the scenes and circumstances which prompted them.

#### ON THE DEPARTURE OF THE YEAR 1837 AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF 1838.

Hark! to the house-clock's measured chime,  
As it cries to the startled ear,  
"A dirge for the soul of departing Time,  
A requiem for the year!"

Thou art passing away to the mighty past,  
Where thy countless brethren sleep,  
Till the great Archangel's trumpet-blast  
Shall waken land and deep.

Oh, the lovely and beautiful things that lie  
On thy cold and motionless breast!  
Oh, the tears, the rejoicings, the smiles, the sighs,  
Departing with thee to their rest.

Thou wert ushered to life amid darkness and gloom,  
But the cold icy cloud passed away,  
And Spring, in her verdure and freshness and bloom  
Touched with glory thy mantle of gray.

The flow'rets burst forth in their beauty — the trees  
In their exquisite robes were arrayed,  
But thou glidest along, and the flower and the leaf  
At the sound of thy footsteps decayed.

And fairer young blossoms were blooming alone,  
And they died at the glance of thine eye,  
But a life was within which should rise o'er their own,  
And a spirit thou could'st not destroy.

Thou hast folded thy pinions, thy race is complete.  
And fulfilled the Creator's behest,  
Then, adieu to thee, year of our sorrows and joys,  
And peaceful and long be thy rest.

Farewell! for thy truth-written record is full,  
And the page weeps, for sorrow and crime;  
Farewell! for the leaf hath shut down on the past,  
And concealed the dark annals of time.

The bell! it hath ceased with its iron tongue  
To ring on the startled ear,  
The dirge o'er the grave of the lost one is rung.  
All hail to the new-born year!

All hail to the new-born year!  
To the child of hope and fear!  
He comes on his car of state,  
And weaves our web of fate;  
And he opens his robe to receive us all,  
And we live or die, and we rise or fall,  
In the arms of the new-born year!

Hope! spread thy soaring wings!  
Look forth on the boundless sea,  
And trace thy bright and beautiful thing!  
On the veil of the great To Be.



Build palaces broad as the sky,  
And store them with treasures of light,  
Let exquisite visions bewilder the eye,  
And illumine the darkness of night.

We are gliding fast from the buried year,  
And the present is no more;  
But, Hope, we will borrow thy sparkling gear,  
And shroud the future o'er.

Our tears and sighs shall sleep  
In the grave of the silent Past;  
We will raise up flowers — nor weep —  
That the air-hues may not last.

We will dream our dreams of joy,  
Ah! Fear! why darken the scene?  
Why sprinkle that ominous tear  
My beautiful visions between?

Hath not Sorrow swift wings of her own,  
That thou must assist in her flight?  
Is not daylight too rapidly gone,  
That thou must urge onward the night?

Ah! leave me to fancy, to hope,  
For grief will too quickly be here;  
Ah! leave me to shadow forth figures of light,  
In the mystical robe of the year.

'T is true, they may never assume  
The substance of pleasure — the real—  
But believe me our purest of joy  
Consists in the vague — the ideal.

Then away to the darksome cave,  
With thy sisters, the sigh and the tear;  
We will drink, in the crystal wave,  
The health of the new-born year.

"She had been for some time thinking of a subject for a poem, and the next day, which was the 1st of January, came to me in great perplexity and asked my advice. I had long desired that she would direct her attention to the beautiful and sublime narratives of the Old Testament, and now proposed that she should take the Bible and examine it with that view. After an hour or two spent in research she remarked that there were many, very many subjects of deep and thrilling interest; but, if she now should make a failure, her discouragement would be such as to prevent her from ever making another attempt. 'I am now,' she said, 'trying my wings; I will take a lighter subject at first: if I succeed, I will then write a more perfect poem, founded upon Sacred History.'"

She accordingly took as a theme a prose tale, in a current work of the day, and wrote several pages with a flowing pen, but soon threw them by, dissatisfied. It was irksome to employ the thoughts and fancies of another and to have to adapt her own to the plan of the author. She wanted something original. "After some farther effort," says Mrs. Davidson, "she came to me out of spirits and in tears. 'Mother,' said she, 'I must give it up after all.' I asked the reason, and then remarked that as she had already so many labors upon her hands, and was still feeble, it might be the wisest course. 'O mother,' said she, 'that is not the reason; my head and my heart are full; poetic images are crowding upon my brain, but every subject has been monopolized: "There is nothing new under the sun."' I said, 'My daughter, that others have written upon a subject is not an objection. The most eminent writers do not always choose what is new.' 'Mother, dear mother, what can I say upon a theme which has been touched by the greatest men of this or some other age? — I, a mere child; it is absurd in me to think of it.' She dropped beside me on the sofa, laid her head upon my bosom, and sobbed violently. I wiped the tears from her face, while my own were fast flowing, and strove to soothe the tumult of her mind...When we were both more calm, I said, 'Margaret, I had hoped that during this winter you would not have commenced or applied yourself to any important work; but, if you feel in that way, I will not urge you to resign an occupation which gives you such exquisite enjoyment.'"

Mrs. Davidson then went on to show to her that, notwithstanding the number of poets that had written, the themes and materials for poetry are inexhaustible. By degrees Margaret became composed; took up a book and read. The words of her mother dwelt in her mind. In a few days she brought her mother the introduction to a projected poem to be called "Leonore." Mrs. Davidson was touched at finding the remarks she had made for the purpose of soothing the agitation of her daughter had served to kindle her imagination, and were poured forth with eloquence in those verses. The excitement continued and the poem of "Leonore" was completed, corrected, and copied into her book by the 1st of March; having written her plan in prose at full length, containing about the same number of lines as the poem. "During its

progress,” says Mrs. Davidson, “when fatigued with writing, she would take her kitten and recline upon the sofa, asking me to relate to her some of the scenes of the last war. Accordingly I would while away our solitude by repeating anecdotes of that period; and before “Leonore” was completed she had advanced several pages in a prose tale, the scene of which was laid upon Lake Champlain during the last war. She at the same time executed faces and figures in crayon which would not have disgraced the pencil of an artist. Her labors were truly immense. Yet a stranger coming occasionally to the house would hardly observe that she had any pressing avocations.”

The following are extracts from a rough draught of a letter written to Miss Sedgwick about this time: —

My Dear Madam,—

I wish I could express to you my pleasure on receiving your kind and affectionate letter. So far from considering myself neglected by your silence, I felt it a great privilege to be permitted to write to you, and knew that I ought not to expect a regular answer to every letter, even while I was longing, day after day, to receive this gratifying token of remembrance. Unless you had witnessed, I fear you would hardly believe my extravagant delight on reading the dear little folded paper so expressive of your kind recollection. I positively danced for joy, bestowed a thousand caresses upon everybody and everything I loved, dreamed of you all night, and arose next morning (with a heart full) to answer your letter; but was prevented by indisposition, and have not been able until now to perform a most pleasing duty by acknowledging its receipt. My health during the past winter has been much better than we had anticipated. It is true I have been, with dear mother, entirely confined to the house; but being able to read, write, and perform all my usual employments, I feel that I have much more reason to be thankful for the blessings continued to me, than to repine because a few have been denied. But spring is now here in name, if not in reality; and I can assure you my heart bounds at the thought of once more escaping from my confinement, and breathing the pure air of heaven, without fearing a blight or a consumption in every breeze. Spring! What pleasure does that magic syllable convey to the heart of an invalid, laden with sweet promises, and bringing before his mind visions of liberty, which those who are always free cannot enjoy. Thus do I dream of summer I may never see, and make myself happy for hours in anticipating pleasures I may never share. It is an idle employment, and little calculated to sweeten disappointment. But it has opened to me many sources of delight otherwise unknown; and when out of humor with the present, I have only to send fancy flower-gathering in the future, and I find myself fully repaid. Dear mother's health has also been much better than we had feared, and her ill turns less frequent and severe. She sits up most of the day, walks around the lower part of the house, and enjoys her book and her pen as much as ever...You speak of your intercourse with Mrs. Jameson. It must indeed be an exquisite pleasure to be intimately associated with a mind like hers. I have never seen anything but extracts from her writings, but must obtain and read them. I suppose the world is anxiously looking for her next volume...We have been reading Lockhart's "Life of Scott." Is it not a deeply interesting work? In what a beautiful light it represents the character of that great and good man. No one can read his life or his works without loving and venerating him. As to "the waters of Helicon," we have but a few niggardly streams in this, our matter-of-fact village; and father in his medical capacity has forbidden my partaking of them as freely as I could wish. But no matter, they have been frozen up, and will flow in "streams more salubrious" beneath the milder sky of spring.

In all her letters we find a solicitude about her mother's health, rather than about her own, and indeed it was difficult to say which was most precarious.

The following extract from a poem written about this time to "Her mother on her fiftieth Birthday," presents a beautiful portrait, and does honor to the filial hand that drew it: —

"Yes, mother, fifty years have fled,  
With rapid footsteps, o'er thy head;  
Have past with all their motley train,  
And left thee on thy couch of pain!  
How many smiles and sighs and tears,  
How many hopes and doubts and fears  
Have vanished with that lapse of years.

Oh, that we all could look, like thee,  
Back on that dark and tideless sea,  
And 'mid its varied records find  
A heart at ease with all mankind,  
A firm and self-approving mind.  
Grief that had broken hearts less fine  
Hath only served to strengthen thine;

Time, that doth chill the fancy's play,  
Hath kindled thine with purer ray;  
And stern disease, whose icy dart  
Hath power to chill the breaking heart,  
Hath left thine warm with love and truth  
As in the halcyon days of youth."

The following letter was written on the 26th of March, to a female cousin resident in New York: —

Dear Kate,—

This day I am fifteen, and you can, you will readily pardon and account for the absurd flights of my pen, by supposing that my tutelary spirits, Nonsense and Folly, have assembled around the being of their creation, and claimed the day as exclusively their own; then I pray you to lay to their account all that I have already scribbled, and believe that, uninfluenced by these grinning deities, I can think and feel and love, as I love you, with all warmth and sincerity of heart. Do you remember how we used to look forward to sweet fifteen, as the pinnacle of human happiness, the golden age of existence? You have but lately passed that milestone in the highway of life; I have just reached it, but I find myself no better satisfied to stand still than before, and look forward to the continuance of my journey with the same ardent longing I felt at fourteen.

Ah, Kate, here we are, two young travellers, starting forth upon our long pilgrimage, and knowing not whither it may conduct us! *You* some months my superior in age, and many years in acquaintance with society, in external attractions, and all those accomplishments necessary to form an elegant woman. *I*, knowing nothing of life but from books, and a small circle of friends, who love me as I love them; looking upon the *past* as a faded dream, which I shall have time enough to study and expound, when old age and sorrow come on; upon the *present* as a nurseling, — a preparative for the *future*; and upon that future, as what? a mighty whirlpool, of hopes and fears, of bright anticipations and bitter disappointments, into which I shall soon plunge, and find there, in common with the rest of the world, my happiness or misery

The following, to a young friend, was also written on the 26th of March: —

My Dear H.,—

You must know that winter has come and gone, and neither mother nor myself have felt a single breeze which could not force its way through the thick walls of our little dwelling. Do you not think I am looking gladly forward to April and May, as the lovely sisters who are to unlock the doors of our prison-house, and give us once more to the free enjoyment of Nature, without fearing a blight or a consumption in every breath? And now for another, and even more delightful anticipation — your visit! Are you indeed coming? And when are you coming? Do answer the first, that I may for once have the pleasure of framing delightful visions without finding them dashed to the ground by the iron hand of Reality, and the last, that I may not expect you too soon, and thus subject myself to all the bitterness of “hope deferred.” Come, for I have so much to say to you, that I cannot possibly contain it until summer; and come quickly, unless you are willing to account for my wasted time as well as your own, for I shall do little else but dream of you and your visit until the time of your arrival. You cannot image how those few words in your little *good for nothing* letter have completely upset my wonted gravity. Do not disappoint me. It is true, mother and I are both feeble and unable to go out with you and show you the lions of our little village, but if warm welcomes can atone for the want of ceremony, you shall have them in abundance; but it seems to me that I shall want to pin you down in a chair, and do nothing but look at you from morning till night. As to coming to Plattsburg, I think if we cannot do so in the spring, (which is doubtful,) we certainly shall in the course of the summer. Brother M. wrote to me yesterday, saying that he would spend the month of August in the country, and if nothing occurred to prevent, we would take our delightful trip by the way of Lake George. Oh, it will be so pleasant! but my anticipations are now all bent upon a nearer object. Do not allow a slight impediment to destroy them. We expect in May to move to Saratoga. We shall then have a more convenient house, better society, and the benefit of a school in which I can practise music and drawing, without being obliged to attend regularly. We shall then be a few miles nearer to you, and at present even that seems something desirable to me. I have read and own three volumes of “Scott’s Life,” and was much disappointed to find that it was not finished in these three, but concluded the remainder had not yet come out. Are the five volumes all? It is indeed a deeply interesting work. I am very fond of biography, for surely there can be nothing more delightful or instructive than to trace in the infancy and youth of every noble mind the germs of its future greatness. Have you read a work called “Letters from Palmyra,” by Mr. Ware of New York? I have not yet seen it, but intend to do so soon. It is written in the character of a citizen of Rome at that early period, and it is said to be a lively picture of the manners and customs of the Imperial City, and still more of the magnificence of Palmyra and its splendid queen, Zenobia. It also contains a beautiful story. I have lately been re-perusing many of Scott’s novels, and intend to finish them. Was ever anything half so fascinating? Oh, how I long to have you here and tell you all these little things in person. Do write to me immediately, and tell me when we may expect you. I shall open your next with a beating heart. Do excuse all the blunders and scrawls of this hasty letter. You must receive it as a proof of friendship, for to a stranger, or one who I thought would look upon it with a cold and critical eye, I certainly should not send it. I believe you and I have entered into a tacit agreement to forgive any little mistakes which the other may chance to commit.

Croyez moi ma chere amie votre.

Marguerite.

The spirits of this most sensitive little being became more and more excited with the opening of spring. “She watched,” says her mother, “the putting forth of the tender grass and the young blossoms as the period which was to liberate her from captivity. She was pleased with everybody and everything. She loved everything in Nature, both animate and inanimate, with a warmth of affection which displayed the benevolence of her own heart. She felt that she was well, and oh! the bright dreams and imaginings, the cloudless future, presented to her ardent mind — all was sunny and gay.”

The following letter is highly expressive of the state of her feelings at that period.

“A few days since, my dearest cousin, I received your affectionate letter, and if my heart smote me at the sight of the well-known superscription, you may imagine how unmercifully it thumped on reading a letter so full of affection, and so entirely devoid of reproach for my unkindly negligence. I can assure you, my dear coz., you could have found no better way of striking home to my heart the conviction of my error; and I resolved that hour, that moment, to lay my confessions at your feet, and sue for forgiveness; I knew you were too gentle to refuse. But alas for human resolves! We were that afternoon expecting brother M. Dear brother! And how could I collect my floating thoughts and curl myself up into a corner with pen, ink, and paper before me, — when my heart was flying away over the sand-hills of this unromantic

region to meet and embrace and welcome home the wanderer. If it can interest you, picture to yourself the little scene, — mother and I breathless with expectation, gazing from the window, in mute suspense, and listening to the “*phiz, phiz*” of the great steam-engine. Then when we caught a rapid glance of his trim little figure, how we bounded away over chairs, sofas, and kittens, to bestow in reality the greeting fancy had so often given him. Oh! what is so delightful as to welcome a friend! Well, three days have passed like a dream, and he is gone again. I am seated at my little table by the fire. Mother is sewing beside me. Puss is slumbering on the hearth, and nothing external remains to convince us of the truth of that bright sunbeam which had suddenly broken upon our quiet retreat, and departed like a vision as suddenly. When shall we have the pleasure of welcoming you thus, my beloved cousin? Your flying call of last summer was but an aggravation. Oh ! may all good angels watch over you and all you love, shake the dew of health from their balmy wings upon your smiling home, and waft you hither, cheerful and happy, to sojourn awhile with the friends who love you so dearly! All hail to spring, the bright, the blooming, the renovating spring! Oh! I am so happy — I feel a lightness at my heart and a vigor in my frame that I have rarely felt. If I speak, my voice forms itself into a laugh. If I look forward, everything seems bright before me. If I look back, memory calls up what is pleasant, and my greatest desire is that my pen could fling a ray of sunshine over this scribbled page and infuse into your heart some of the cheerfulness of my own. I have been confined to the house all winter, as it was thought the best and only way of restoring my health. Now my symptoms are all better, and I am looking forward to next month and its blue skies with the most childish impatience. By the way, I am not to be called a child any more; for yesterday I was *fifteen*! what say you to that? I feel quite like an old woman, and think of putting on caps and spectacles next month.”

It was during the same exuberance of happy feeling, with the delusive idea of confirmed health and the anticipation of blight enjoyments, that she broke forth like a bird into the following strain of melody: —

“Oh, my bosom is throbbing with joy,  
With a rapture too full to express;  
From within and without I am blest,  
And the world, like myself, I would bless.

All Nature looks fair to my eye,  
From beneath and around and above,  
Hope smiles in the clear azure sky,  
And the broad earth is glowing with lore.

I stand on the threshold of life,  
On the shore of its wide rolling sea;  
I have heard of its storms and its strife,  
But all things are tranquil to me.

There’s a veil o’er the future — ’t is bright  
As the wing of a spirit of air,  
And each form of enchantment and light  
Is trembling in iris-hues there.

I turn to the world of affection,  
And warm, glowing treasures are mine;  
To the past, and my fond recollection  
Gathers roses from memory’s shrine.

But oh, there’s a fountain of joy  
More rich than a kingdom beside,  
It is holy — death cannot destroy  
The flow of its heavenly tide.

’T is the love that is gushing within,  
It would bathe the whole world in its light;  
The cold stream of time shall not quench it,  
The dark frown of woe shall not blight.

These visions of pleasure may vanish,  
These bright dreams of youth disappear,  
Disappointment each air hue may banish.  
And drown each frail joy in a tear.

I may plunge in the billows of life,  
I may taste of its dark cup of woe,  
I may weep, and the sad drops of grief  
May blend with the waves as they flow.

I may dream, till reality’s shadow  
O’er the light form of fancy is cast;  
I may hope, until hope, too, despairing,

Has crept — to the grave of the Past.

But though the wild waters surround me,  
Misfortune, temptation, and sin,  
Though Fear be about and beyond me  
And Sorrow's dark shadow within.

Though Age, with an icy cold finger,  
May stamp his pale seal on my brow —  
Still, still in my bosom shall linger  
The glow that is warming it now.

Youth will vanish, and Pleasure, gay charmer,  
May depart on the wings of to-day,  
But that spot in my heart shall grow warmer,  
As year after year rolls away."

"While her spirits were thus light and gay," says Mrs. Davidson, "from the prospect of returning health, my more mature judgment told me that those appearances might be deceptive — that even now the destroyer might be making sure his work of destruction; but she really seemed better; the cough had subsided, her step was buoyant, her face glowed with animation, her eye was bright, and love, boundless, universal love, seemed to fill her young heart. Every symptom of her disease assumed a more favorable cast. Oh, how my heart swelled with the mingled emotions of hope, doubt, and gratitude. Our hopes of her ultimate recovery seemed to be founded upon reason, yet her father still doubted the propriety of our return to Lake Champlain; and as Saratoga held out many more advantages than Ballston as a temporary residence, he decided to spend the ensuing year or two there; and then we might perhaps, without much risk, return to our much-loved and long-deserted home on the banks of the Saranac. Accordingly a house was taken and every preparation made for our removal to Saratoga on the first of May. Margaret was pleased with the arrangement."

The following playful extract of a letter to her brother in New York, exhibits her feelings on the prospect of their change of residence : —

"I now most humbly avail myself of your most gracious permission to scribble you a few lines in token of my everlasting love. 'This is to inform you I am very well, hoping these few lines will find you in possession of the same blessing' — notwithstanding the blue streaks that flitted over your pathway a few days after you left us. Perhaps it was occasioned by remorse at the cruelty of your parting speech, perhaps it was the reflection of a bright blue eye upon the deep waters of your soul; but let the cause be what it may, — 'black spirits or white, blue spirits or gray,' — I hope the effect has entirely disappeared, and you are no longer tinged with its most doleful shadow. A blue sky, a blue eye, or the blue dye of the violet, are all undeniably beautiful, but this tint when transferred from the works of Nature to the brow of man, or the stockings of woman, becomes a thing to ridicule or weep at. May your spirits henceforth, my dear brother, be preserved from this ill-omened influence, and may your feet and ankles never be graced with garments of a hue so repulsive. O brother, we are all in the heat of moving; we, I say; you will account for the use of that personal pronoun on the authority of the old proverb, 'What a dust we flies raise,' for, to be frank with you, I have little or nothing to do with it, but poor mother is over head and ears in boxes, bedclothes, carpets, straw, and discussions. Our hall is already filled with the fruits of her labors and perseverance, in the shape of certain blue chests, carpet-cases, trunks, boxes, &c, all ready for a move. Dear mother is head, hand, and feet for the whole machine; our *two helps* being nothing but cranks, which turn when you touch them, and cease their rotary movement when the force is withdrawn. Heigho. We miss our good C--, with her quick invention and helpful hand...O my dear brother, I am anticipating so much pleasure next summer, I hope it will not all prove a dream. It will be so delightful when you come up in August and bring cousin K-- with you; tell her I am calculating upon this pleasure with all my powers of fore-enjoyment— tell her also that I am waiting most impatiently for that annihilating letter of hers, and if it does not come soon, I shall send her another cannonade, ere she has recovered the stunning effects of the first. Oh dear! I have written you a most dis-understandable letter, and now you must excuse me, as I have declared war against M--, and after mending my pen, must collect all my scattered ideas into a fleet, and launch them for a combat upon a whole sea of ink."

"The exuberance of her spirit," says her mother, "as the spring advanced, and she was enabled once more to take exercise in the open air, displayed itself in everything. Her heart was overflowing with thankfulness and love. Ever; fine day in the latter part of April she either rode on horse back or drove out in a carriage. All Nature looked lovely to her; not a tree or shrub but conveyed some poetical image or moral lesson to her mind. The moment, however, that she began to take daily exercise in the open air, I again heard with agony the prophetic cough. I felt that all was over! She thought that she had taken cold, and our friends were of the same opinion. 'It was a slight cold which would vanish beneath the mild influence of spring.' I, however, feared that her father's hopes might have blinded his judgment, and upon my own responsibility consulted a skilful physician, who had on many former occasions attended her. She was not aware of my present alarm, or that the physician was now consulted. He managed in a playful manner to feel her pulse, without her suspicions. After he had left the room, 'Madam,' said he, 'it is useless to hold out any false hopes; your daughter has a seated consumption, which is, I fear, beyond the reach of medical skill. There is no hope in the case; make her as happy and as comfortable as you can; let her enjoy riding in pleasant weather, but her walks must be given up; walking is too great an exertion for her.' With an aching heart I returned to the lovely unconscious victim, and found her tying on her hat for a ramble. I gently tried to dissuade her from going. She caught my eye, and read there a tale of grief, which she could not understand, and I could not explain. As soon as I dared trust my voice, I said, 'My dear Margaret, nothing has happened, only I have just been speaking with Dr.--, respecting you, and he advises that you give up walking altogether."

Knowing how much you enjoy it, I am pained to mention this, for I know that it will be a great privation.' 'Why, mamma,' she exclaimed, 'this cold is wearing off; may I not walk then?' 'The Doctor thinks you should make no exertion of that kind, but riding in fine weather may have a happy effect.' She stood and gazed upon my face long and earnestly; then untied her hat and sat down, apparently ruminating upon what had past; she asked no questions, but an expression of thoughtfulness clouded her brow during the rest of the day. It was settled that she was to ride out in fine weather, but not to walk out at all, and in a day or two she seemed to have forgotten the circumstance altogether. The return of the cough and profuse night-perspirations too plainly told me her doom; but I still clung to the hope, that, as she suffered no pain, she might, by tender, judicious treatment, continue yet for years. I urged her to remit her labors; she saw how much my heart was in the request, and promised to comply with my wishes. On the first of May we removed to Saratoga. One short half hour in the railroad car completed the journey, and she arrived, fresh, cheerful, and blooming, in her appearance, such an effect had the excitement of pleasure upon her lovely face."

On the day we left Ballston she wrote "A Parting Word " to Mrs. H., who had been one of our most intimate and affectionate visitors throughout the winter, and whose husband had assisted her much in her studies of moral philosophy, as well as delighted her by his varied and instructive conversation.

A PARTING WORD TO MY DEAR MRS. H.  
Ballston Spa, April 30, 1838.

At length the awful morn hath come.  
The parting hour is nigh,  
And I sit down 'mid dust and gloom,  
To bid you brief " good-bye."

Each voice to fancy's listening ear  
Repeats the doleful cry,  
And the bare walls and sanded floor  
Reecho back " good-bye."

So must it be! but many a thought  
Comes crowding on my mind,  
Of the dear friends, the happy hours,  
The joys we leave behind.

How we shall miss your cheerful face.  
Forever bright and smiling,  
And your sweet voice so often heard  
Our weary hours beguiling!

How shall we miss the kindly hearts,  
Which none can know unloving,  
Whose thoughts and feelings none can read,  
Nor find his own improving!

And he, whose converse, hour by hour,  
Hath lent old Time new pinions,  
Whose hand hath drawn the shadowy veil  
From Wisdom's broad dominions.

Whose voice hath poured forth priceless gems,  
Scarce conscious that he taught,  
Whose mind of broad, of loftiest reach,  
Hath showered down thought on thought.

True, we may meet with many a dear  
And cherished friend, -- yet  
Oft shall we cast a backward glance  
Of wistful — vain regret.

When evening spreads her sombre veil,  
To fold the slumbering earth,  
When our small circle closes round  
The humble, social hearth, —

Oft shall we dream of hours gone by,  
And con these moments o'er,  
Till we half bend our ears to catch  
Your footsteps at the door.  
And then turn back and sigh to think  
We hear those steps no more!

But though these dismal thoughts arise.  
Hope makes me happy still;  
There is a drop of comfort lurks  
In every draught of ill!

By pain and care each joy of earth  
More exquisite is made,  
And when we meet the parting grief  
Shall doubly be o'erpaid.

In disappointments -deep too quick  
Our fairest prospects drown;  
Let not this hope, which blooms so bright,  
Be withered at his frown!

Come, and a mother's pallid cheek  
Shall brighten at your smile,  
And her poor frame, so faint and weak,  
Forget its pains the while.

Come, and a glad and happy heart  
Shall give the welcome kiss,  
And puss shall purr, and frisk, and mew,  
In token of her bliss.

Come! and behold how I improve  
In dusting — cleaning — sweeping,  
And I will hear, with patient ear,  
Your lectures on house-keeping.

And now, may all good angels guard  
Your path where'er it lie,  
May peace reign monarch in our breast,  
And gladness in your eye.

And may the dews of health descend,  
On him you cherish best,  
To his worn frame their influence lend,  
And calm each nerve to rest!

And may we meet again! nor feel  
The parting hour so nigh;  
Peace, love, and happiness to all,  
Once more — once more "good-bye!"

"She interested herself," continued Mrs. Davidson, "more than I had anticipated in the arrangement of our new habitation and in forming plans of future enjoyment with our friends, when they should visit us; I exerted myself to please her taste in everything, although she was prohibited from making the slightest physical exertion herself. The house settled, then came the flower-garden, in which she spent more time than I thought prudent; but she was so happy while thus engaged and the weather being fine, and the gardener disposed to gratify her and carry all her little plans into effect, I, like a weak mother, wanted resolution to interfere, and have always reproached myself for it, although not conscious that it was an injury at the time. Her brother had invited her to return to New York with him when he came to visit us in June, and she was now impatiently counting the days until his arrival. Her feelings are portrayed in a letter to her young friend H."

Saratoga, June 1, 1838.

JUNE is at last with us, my dear cousin, and the blue-eyed goddess could not have looked upon the green bosom of her mother earth, attired in a lovelier or more enchanting robe. I am seated by an open window, and the breeze, laden with the perfumes of the blossoms and opening leaves, just lifts the edge of my sheet, and steals with the gentlest footsteps imaginable to fan my cheek and forehead. The grass, tinged with the deepest and freshest green, is waving beneath its influence; the birds are singing their sweetest songs; and as I look into the depths of the clear blue sky the rich tints appear to flit higher and higher as I gaze, till my eye seems searching into immeasurable distance. Oh! such a day as this, it is a luxury to breathe. I feel as if I could frisk and gambol like my kitten from the mere consciousness of life. Yet with all the loveliness around me I re-peruse your letter, and long for wings to fly from it all to the dull atmosphere and crowded highways of the city. Yes! I could then look into your eyes and I should forget the blue sky; and your smile and your voice would doubly compensate me for the loss of green trees and singing birds. There are green trees in the heart which shed a softer perfume, and birds which sing more sweetly. "Nonsense, Mag is growing sentimental; " I knew you would say so, but the streak came across me, and you have it at full length. In plainer terms, how delighted, how more than delighted I shall be when I do come! when I do come, Kate! oh! oh! oh! what would our language be without interjections, those expressive parts of speech which say so much in so small a compass. Now I am sure you can understand from these

three syllables all the pleasure, the rapture I anticipate; the meeting, the parting, all the component parts of that great whole which I denominate a visit to New York! No, not to New York! but to the few dear friends whose society will afford me all the enjoyment I expect or desire, and who, in fact, constitute all my New York.

*June 2.* I had written thus far, dear Kate, when I was most agreeably interrupted by a proposal for a ride on horseback; my sheet slid of itself into the open drawer, my hat and dress flew on as if by instinct, and in ten minutes I was galloping full speed through the streets of our little village, with father by my side. I rode till nearly tea-time, and came home tired, tired, tired. Oh, I ache to think of it. My poor letter slept all night as soundly as its writer, but now that another day has dawned the very opposite of its predecessor, damp, dark, and rainy, I have drawn it forth from its receptacle, and seek to dissipate all outward gloom, by communing with one the thought of whom conveys to my mind anything but melancholy. O Kate, Kate, in spite of your disinterested and sober advice to the contrary, I shall come, I shall soon come, just as soon as M. can and will run up for me. Yet perhaps in the end I shall be disappointed. My happy anticipations resemble the cloudless sky of yesterday, and who knows but a stormy to-morrow may erase the brilliant tints of hope as well as those of Nature?...Do write quickly and tell me if I am to prepare. If you continue to feel as when you last wrote and still advise me not to come, I shall dispose of your advice in the most approved manner, throw it to the winds, and embark armed and equipped for your city to make my destined visit, and fulfill its conditions by fair means or foul, and bring you home in triumph. Oh! we shall have fine times. Oh, dear, I blush, to look back upon my sheet and see so many I's in it.

“The time of her brother's coming drew near. He would be with us at 9 in the morning. At 11 they were to start. I prepared all for her departure with my own hand, lest, should I trust it to a domestic to make the arrangements, she would make some exertion herself. She sat by me whilst thus engaged, relating playful anecdotes until I urged her to retire for the night. On going into her room an hour or two afterwards, I was alarmed to find her in a high fever. About midnight she was taken with bleeding at the lungs. I flew to her father, and in a few minutes a vein was opened in her arm. To describe our feelings at this juncture is impossible. We stood, gazing at each other in mute despair. After that shock had subsided her father retired, and I seated myself by the bedside to watch her slumbers, and the rising sun found me still at my post. She awoke, pale, feeble, and exhausted by the debilitating perspiration which attended her sleep. She was surprised to find that I had not been in bed; but when she attempted to speak I laid my finger upon her lips and desired her to be silent. She understood my motive, and when I bent my head to kiss her, I saw a tear upon her cheek. I told her the necessity of perfect quiet, and the danger which would result from agitation. Before her brother came she desired to rise. I assisted her to do so, and he found her quietly seated in her easy-chair, perfectly composed in manner, and determined not to increase her difficulties by giving way to feelings which must at that time have oppressed her heart. My son was greatly shocked to find her in this state. I met him and urged the importance of perfect self-possession on his part, as any sudden agitation might in her present alarming state be fatal. Poor fellow! he subdued his feelings and met her with a cheerful smile which concealed a heart almost bursting with sorrow. The propriety of her taking this jaunt had been discussed by her father and myself for a number of weeks. We both thought her too ill to leave home, but her strong desire to go, the impression she had imbibed that travelling would greatly benefit her health, and the pleading of friends in her behalf, on the ground that disappointment would have a more unfavorable effect than the journey possibly could have, all had their effect in leading us to consent. It was possible it might be of use to her, although it was at best an experiment of a doubtful nature. But this attack was decisive; yet caution must be used in breaking the matter to her in her present weak state. Her brother stayed a day or two with us, and then returned, telling her that when she was able to perform the journey, he would come again and take her with him. After he left us, she soon regained her usual strength, and in a fortnight her brother returned and took her to New York.”

The anxiety of Mrs. Davidson was intense until she received her first letter. It was written from New York, and in a cheerful vein, speaking encouragingly of her health, but showing more solicitude about the health and well-being of her mother than of her own. She continued to write frequently, giving animated accounts of scenes and persons.

The following extract relates to an excursion, in company with two of her brothers, into Westchester County, one of the pleasantest, and, until recently, the least fashionably known, regions on the banks of the Hudson.

“At 3 o'clock we were in the Singing steamer, with the water sparkling below, and the sun broiling overhead. In the course of our sail a huge thunder-cloud arose, and I retreated, quite terrified, to the cabin. But it proved a refreshing shower. Oh! how sweet, how delightful the air was. When we landed at the dock, everything looked so fresh and green! We mounted into a real country vehicle, and rattled up the hill to the village inn, a quiet, pleasant little house. I was immediately shown to my room, where I stayed until tea-time, enjoying the prospect of a splendid sunset upon the mountains, and resting after the fatigues of the day. At 7 we drank tea, a meal strongly contrasted with the fashionable, meagre unsocial city tea. The table was crowded with everything good, in the most bountiful style, and served with the greatest attention by the landlord's pretty daughter. I retired soon after tea, and slept soundly until daybreak. After breakfast we sent for a carriage to take us along the course of the Croton, to see the famous water-works; but, to our disappointment, every carriage was engaged, and we could not go. In the afternoon a party was made up to go in a boat across the river, and ascend a mountain to a singular lake upon its summit, where all the implements of fishing were provided, and a collation was prepared. In short, it was a picnic. To this we were invited, but on learning they would not return until 9 or 10 in the evening, that scheme also was abandoned. Towards night we walked around the village, looked at the tunnel, and visited the ice-cream man; and in spite of my various disappointments, I retired quite happy and pleased with my visit. The next day was Sunday, and we proposed going to the little Dutch church, a few miles distant, and hearing the service performed in Dutch; but lo! on drawing aside my curtains in the morning it rained, and we were obliged to content ourselves as well as we could until the rain was over. After dinner the sun again peeped out, as if for our especial gratification, and in a few minutes a huge country wagon, with a leathern top and two sleek horses, drew up to the door. We mounted into it, and away we rattled over the most beautiful country I ever saw. Oh! it was magnificent! Every now and then the view of the broad Hudson, with its distant hills, and the clouds resting on their summits, burst upon our view.



Now we would ascend a lofty hill, clothed with forests and verdure of the most brilliant hues; now dash down into a deep ravine, with a stream winding and gurgling along its bed, with its tiny waves rushing over the wheel of some rustic mill, embosomed in its shade and solitude. Every now and then the gable-end of some low Dutch building would present itself before us, smiling in its peaceful stillness, and conveying to the mind a perfect picture of rural simplicity and comfort, although, perhaps, of ignorance. At length we paused upon the summit of a gentle hill, and judge of my delight when I beheld below me the old Dutch church, the quiet, secluded, beautiful little churchyard, the running stream, the path, and the rustic bridge, the ever-memorable scene of Ichabod's adventure with the *headless horseman*. There, thought I, rushed the poor pedagogue, his knees cramped up to his saddle-bow with fear, his hands grasping his horse's mane, with convulsive energy, in the hope that the rising stream might arrest the progress of his fearful pursuer, and allow him to pass in safety. Vain hope! Scarce had he reached the bridge when he heard, rattling behind him, the hoofs of his fiendish companion. The church seemed in a blaze to his bewildered eyes, and urging on, on, he turned to look once more, when, horror of horrors! the head, the fearful head, was in the act of descending upon his devoted shoulders. Ha! ha! ha! I never laughed so in my life. Well, we rode on through the scene of poor Andre's capture, and dashed along the classic valleys of Sleepy Hollow. After a long and delightful drive, we returned in time for tea. After tea we were invited into Mrs. F.'s parlor, where, after a short time, were collected quite a party of ladies and gentlemen. At 9 we were served with ice-cream, wine, &c. I retired very much pleased and very much fatigued. Early in the morning we rose with a most brilliant sun, breakfasted, mounted once more into the wagon, and rattled off to the dock. Oh! that I could describe to you how fresh and sweet the air was. I felt as if I wanted to open my mouth wide and inhale it. We gave M. our parting kisses, and soon found ourselves once more, after this charming episode, approaching the mighty city. We had a delightful sail of two or three hours, and again rode up to dear aunt M.'s, where all seemed glad at my return. I spent the remainder of the day in resting and reading."

"In these artless epistles," continues Mrs. Davidson, "there is much of character; for who could imagine this constant cheerfulness, this almost forgetfulness of self, these affectionate endeavors, by her sweetly playful account of all her employments while absent, to dispel the grief which she knew was preying upon my mind on account of her illness. Who could conceive the pains she took to conceal from me the ravages which disease was daily making upon her form. She was never heard to complain, and in her letters to me she hardly alludes to her illness. The friends to whom I had entrusted her, during her short period of absence, sometimes feared that she would never be able to reach home again. Her brother told me, but not until long after her return, that on her way home she really fainted several times from debility, and that he took her from the boat to the carriage as he would have done an infant."

"On the 6th of July I once more folded to my heart this cherished object of my solicitude, but oh, the change which three short weeks had wrought in her appearance struck me forcibly. I was so wholly unprepared for it that I nearly fainted. After the excitement of the meeting, (which she had evidently summoned all her fortitude to bear with composure) was over, she sat down by me, and passing her thin arm around my waist, said, 'O my dear mamma, I am home again at last; I now feel as if I never wanted to leave you again; I have had a delightful visit, my friends were all glad to see me, and have watched over me with all the kindness and care which affection could dictate; but oh, there is no place like home, and no sare like a mother's care; there is something in the very air of home and in the sound of your voice, mother, which makes me happier just now than all the scenes which I have passed through in my little-joint; oh, after all, home is the only place for a person as much out of health as I am.' I strove to support my emotions, while I marked her pale cheek and altered countenance. She fixed her penetrating eyes upon my face, kissed me, and drawing back to take a more full survey of the effects which pain and anxiety had wrought in me, kissed me again and again, saying, 'she knew I had deeply felt the want of her society, and now once more at home, she should so prize its comforts as to be in no haste to leave it again.' She was much wasted, and could hardly walk from one room to another; her cough was very distressing; she had no pain, but a languor and a depression of spirits, foreign to her nature. She struggled against this debility, and called up all the energies of her mind to overcome it; her constant reply to inquiries about her health, by the friends who called, was the same as formerly, 'Well, quite well — mother calls me an invalid, but I feel well.' Yet to me, when alone, she talked more freely of her symptoms, and I thought I could discern from her manner, that she had apprehensions as to the result. I had often endeavored to acquire firmness sufficient to tell her what was her situation, but she seemed so studiously to avoid the disclosure, that my resolution had hitherto been unequal to the task. But I was much surprised one day, not long after her return from New York, by her asking me to tell her without reserve my opinion of her state; the question wrung my very heart. I was wholly unprepared for it, and it was put in so solemn a manner that I could not evade it, were I disposed to do so. I knew with what strong affection she clung to life and the objects and friends which endeared it to her; I knew how bright the world upon which she was just entering appeared to her young fancy, what glowing pictures she had drawn of future usefulness and happiness. I was now called upon at one blow to crush these hopes, to destroy the delightful visions which had hovered around her from her cradle until this very period; it would be cruel and wrong to deceive her; in vain I attempted a reply to her direct and solemn appeal, and my voice grew husky; several times I essayed to speak, but the words died away on my lips; I could only fold her to my heart in silence, imprint a kiss upon her forehead, and leave the room to avoid agitating her with feelings I had no power to repress."

"The following extract from a letter to her brother in New York, dated a short time after this incident occurred, and which I never saw until after her departure, will best portray her own feelings at this period."

"As to my health at present, I feel as well as when you were here, and the cough is much abated; but it is evident to me that mother thinks me not so well as before I left home; I do not myself believe that I have gained anything from the visit, and in a case like mine, standing still is certainly loss, but I feel no worse. However, I have learned that feelings are no criterion of disease. Now, brother, I want to know what Dr. M-- discovered, or thought he discovered, in his examination of my lungs; father says nothing — mother, when I ask, cannot tell me, and looks so sad! Now I ask you, hoping to be answered. If you have not heard the Doctor say, I wish you would ask him, and write to me. If it is more unfavorable than I anticipate, it is best I should know now; if it is the contrary, how much pain and restlessness and suspicion will be spared me by the knowledge. As to myself, I feel and know that my health is in a most precarious state,

that the disease we dread has perhaps fastened upon me; but I have an impression that if I make use of the proper remedies and exercise, I may yet recover a tolerable degree of health. I do not feel that my case is incurable; I wish to know if I am wrong. I have rode on horseback twice since you left me; dear, dear brother, what a long egotistic letter I have written you; do forgive me; my heart was full, and I felt that I must unburden it. I wish you would write me a long letter. Do not let mother know at present the questions I have asked you.”

“From this period she grew more thoughtful. There was even a solemnity in her manner which I never before observed. Her mind, as I mentioned before, had been much perplexed by some doctrinal points. To solve these doubts, I asked if I should not send for some clergyman. She said no. She had heard many discussions on these subjects, and they had always served rather to confuse than to convince her. ‘I would rather converse with you alone, mother.’ She then asked me if I thought it essential to salvation that she should adopt any particular creed. I felt that I was an inefficient, perhaps a blind guide, yet it was my duty not only to impart consolation, but to explain to her my own views of the truth. I replied that I considered faith and repentance only to be essential to salvation; that it was very desirable that her mind should be settled upon some particular mode of faith; but that I did not think it absolutely necessary that she should adopt the tenets of any established church, and again recommended an attentive perusal of the New Testament. She expressed her firm belief in the divinity of Christ. The perfections of his character, its beauty and holiness excited her admiration, while the benevolence which prompted the sacrifice of himself to save a lost world filled her with the most enthusiastic gratitude. It was a source of regret that so much of her time had been spent in light reading, and that her writings had not been of a more decidedly religious character. She lamented that she had not chosen Scriptural subjects for the exercise of her poetical talent, and said, ‘Mamma, should God spare my life, my time and talents shall for the future be devoted to a higher and holier end.’ She felt that she had trifled with the gifts of Providence, and her self-condemnation and grief were truly affecting. ‘And must I die so young! — my career of usefulness hardly commenced? O mother, how sadly have I trifled with the gifts of Heaven! What have I done which can benefit one human being?’ I folded her to my heart, and endeavored to soothe the tumult of her feelings, bade her remember her dutiful conduct as a daughter, her affectionate bearing as a sister and friend, and the consolation which she had afforded me through years of suffering!’ ‘O my mother,’ said she, ‘I have been reflecting much of late upon this sad waste of intellect, and had marked out for myself a course of usefulness which, should God spare my life’ — Here her emotions became too powerful to proceed. At times she suffered much anxiety with regard to her eternal welfare, and deeply lamented her want of faithfulness in the performance of her religious duties; complained of coldness and formality in her devotional exercises, and entreated me to pray with and for her. At other times her hope of heaven would be bright, her faith unwavering, and her devotion fervent. Yet it was evident to me that she still cherished the hope that her life might be prolonged. Her mother had lingered for years in a state equally hopeless, and during that period had been enabled to attend to the moral and religious culture of her little family. Might not the same kind Providence prolong *her* life. It would be vain to attempt a description of those seasons of deep and thrilling interest. God alone knows in what way my own weak frame was sustained. I felt that she had been renovated and purified by Divine Grace, and to see her thus distressed when I thought that all the consolations of the Gospel ought to be hers, gave my heart a severe pang. Many of our friends now were of opinion that a change of climate might benefit, perhaps restore her. Heretofore, when the suggestion had been made, she shrunk from the idea of leaving her home for a distant clime. Now her anxiety to try the effect of a change was great, I felt that it would be vain, although I was desirous that nothing should be left untried. Feeble as she now was, the idea of her resigning the comforts of home and being subject to the fatigues of travelling in public conveyances was a dreadful one; yet if there was a rational prospect of prolonging her life by these means, I was anxious to give them a trial. Dr. Davidson, after much deliberation on the subject, called counsel. Dr. — came, and when, after half an hour’s pleasant and playful conversation with Margaret, he joined us in the parlor, oh! how my poor heart trembled. I hung upon the motions of his lips as if my own life depended on what they might utter. At length he spoke, and I felt as if an ice-bolt had passed through my heart. He had never thought, although he had known her many years, that a change of climate would benefit her. She had lived beyond his expectations many months, even years; and now he was convinced, were we to attempt to take her to a Southern climate, that she would die on the passage. Make it as pleasant as possible for her at home, was his advice. He thought that a few months must terminate her life. She knew that we had confidence in the opinion of this, her favorite physician. When I had gained firmness enough to answer her questions, I again entered the room and found her composed, although she had evidently been strongly agitated, and had not brought her mind to hear her doom. Never, oh! never to the latest hour of my life, shall I forget the look she gave me when I met her. What a heart-rending task was mine! I performed it as gently as possible. I said the Doctor thought her strength unequal to the fatigue of the journey; that he was not so great an advocate for change of climate as many persons; that he had known many cases in which he thought it injurious, and his best advice was that we should again ward off the severity of the winter by creating an atmosphere within our house. She mildly acquiesced, and the subject was dropped altogether. She sometimes read, and frequently from mere habit, held a book in her hand when unable to digest its contents, and within the book there usually rested a piece of paper, upon which she occasionally marked the reflections which arose in her mind, either in poetry or prose.

“The following fragments appear to be the very breathings of her soul during the last few weeks of her life— written in pencil, in a hand so weak and tremulous that I could with difficulty decipher them word by word, with the aid of a strong magnifying glass.

‘Consumption! child of woe, thy blighting breath  
Marks all that’s fair and lovely for thine own,  
And, sweeping o’er the silver chords of life,  
Blends all their music in one death-like tone.

1838.

What strange, what mystic things we are,  
With spirits longing to outlive the stars.

.....but even in decay  
Hasting to meet our brethren in the dust.  
As one small dew-drop runs, another drops  
To sink unnoticed in the world of waves.

Oh, it is sad to feel that when a few short years  
Of life are past, we shall lie down, unpitied  
And unknown, amid a careless world;  
That youth and age and revelry and grief  
Above our heads shall pass, and we alone  
Shall sleep! alone shall be as we have been,  
No more'.....

“These are unfinished fragments, a part of which I could not decipher at all. I insert them to give an idea of the daily operations of her mind during the whole of this long summer of suffering. Her gentle spirit never breathed a murmur or complaint. I think she was rarely heard to express even a feeling of weariness. But here are a few more of those outpourings of the heart. I copy these little effusions with all their errors; there is a sacredness about them which forbids the change even of a single letter. The first of the fragments which follow was written on a Sabbath evening in autumn, not many weeks before her death.

‘It is autumn, the season of rapid decay,  
When the flow’rets of summer are hasting away  
From the breath of the wintry blast,  
And the buds which oped to the gazer’s eye,  
And the glowing tints of the gorgeous sky,  
And the forests robed in their emerald dye,  
With their loveliest blossoms have past.  
’T is eve, and the brilliant sunset hue  
Is replaced by a sky of the coldest blue,  
Untouched by a floating cloud.  
And all Nature is silent, calm, and serene,  
As though sorrow and suffering never had been  
On this beautiful earth abroad.  
’T is a Sabbath eve, and the longing soul  
Is charmed by its quiet and gentle control  
From each wayward and wandering thought,  
And it longs from each meaner affection to move,  
And it soareth the troubles of earth above,  
To bathe in that fountain of light and love,  
Whence our purest enjoyments are caught.’

1838.

‘But winter, oh what shall thy greeting be  
From our waters, our earth, and our sky;  
What welcoming strain shall arise for thee  
As thy chariot-wheels draw nigh?  
Alas! the fresh flowers of the spirit decay  
As thy cold, cold steps advance,  
And even young Fancy is shrinking away  
From the chill of thy terrible glance;  
And Hope with her mantle of rainbow hue  
Hath fled from thy freezing eye,  
And her bright train of visions are melting in air  
As thy shivering blasts sweep by.  
Thy’.....

Oct. 1838.

‘The nature of the soul,  
The spirit, what is it? Mysterious, sublime,  
Undying, unchanging, forever the same,  
It bounds lightly athwart the dark billows of time,  
And moves on unscorched by its heavenly flame.

Man owns thee, and feels thee, and knows thee divine;  
He feels thou art his, and thou never canst die;  
He believes thee a gem from the Maker’s pure shrine,  
A portion of purity holy and high.

’T is around him, within him the source of his life,  
Yet too weak to contemplate its glory and might;

He trembling shrinks back to dull earth's humble strife.  
And leaves the pure atmosphere glowing with light

Thou spark from the Deity's radiant throne,  
I know thee, yet shrink from thy greatness and power,  
Thou art mine in thy splendor, I feel thee my own,  
Yet behold me as frail as the light summer flower.

I strive in my weakness to gaze on thy might.  
To trace out thy wanderings through ages to come,  
Till like birds on the sea, all exhausted, at length  
I flutter back weary to earth as my home.

Like a diamond when laid in a rough case of clay,  
Which may crumble and wear from the pure gem enclosed,  
But which ne'er can be lit by one tremulous ray  
From the glory-crowned star in its dark case reposed.'

"As the cool weather advanced, her decline became more visible, and she devoted more and more of her time to searching the Scriptures, self-examination and subjects for reflection, and questions which were to be solved by evidences deduced from the Bible. I found them but a few days before her death, in the sacred volume which lay upon the table, at which she usually sat during her hours of retirement. She had been searching the holy book, and overcome by the exertion, rang the bell which summoned me to her side, for no person but myself was admitted during the time set apart for her devotional exercises.

'Subjects for reflection : —

1st. The uniform usefulness of Christ's miracles.

2d. The manner in which he overthrows all the exalted hopes which the Jews entertain of a temporal kingdom, and strives to explain to them the entire spirituality of the one he has come to erect.

3d. The deep and unchangeable love for man, which must have impelled Christ to resist so many temptations and endure so many sufferings, even death, that truth might enlighten the world, and heaven and immortality become realities instead of dreams.

4th. The general thoughtlessness of man with regard to his greatest, his only interest.

5th. Christ's constant submission to the will of his Father, and the necessity of our imitating the meek and calm and gentle qualities of his character, together with that firmness of purpose and confidence in God which sustained him to the end.

6th. The necessity of so living, that we need not fear to think each day our last.

7th. The necessity of religion to soothe and support the mind on the bed of sickness.

8th. Self-examination.

9th. Is Christ mentioned expressly in Scripture as equal with God and a part?

10th. Is there sufficient ground for the doctrine of the Trinity?

11th. Did Christ come as a prophet and reformer of the world, or as a sacrifice for our sins, to appease the wrath of his Father.

12th. Is anything said of infant baptism?'

Written in November, 1838.

"About three weeks before her departure, I one morning found her in the parlor, where, as I before observed, she spent a portion of her time in retirement. I saw that she had been much agitated, and seemed weary. I seated myself by her and rested her head on my bosom, while I gently pressed my hand upon her throbbing temples, to soothe the agitation of her nerves. She kissed me again and again, and seemed as if she feared to trust her voice to speak, lest her feelings should overcome her. As I returned her caresses, she silently put a folded paper in my hand. I began to open it, when she gently laid her hand on mine, and said in a low tremulous tone, 'Not now dear mother!' I then led her back to her room, placed her upon the sofa, and retired to examine the paper. It contained the following lines: —

TO MY MOTHER.

O Mother, would the power were mine  
To wake the strain thou lov'st to hear,  
And breathe each trembling new-born thought  
Within thy fondly listening ear.  
As when in days of health and glee  
My hopes and fancies wandered free.

But, mother, now a shade has past  
Athwart my brightest visions here,  
A cloud of darkest gloom has wrapt  
The remnant of my brief career!  
No song, no echo can I win,  
The sparkling fount has died within.

The torch of earthly hope burns dim,

And Fancy spreads her wings no more;  
 And oh, how vain and trivial seem  
 The pleasures that I prized before.  
 My soul, with trembling steps and slow,  
 Is struggling on through doubt and strife.  
 Oh! may it prove as time rolls on,  
 The pathway to eternal life; —  
 Then, when my cares and fears are o'er,  
 I'll sing thee as in days of yore.

I said that hope had passed from earth,  
 'T was but to fold her wings in heaven,  
 To whisper of the soul's new birth,  
 Of sinners saved and sins forgiven.  
 When mine are washed in tears away,  
 Then shall my spirit swell my lay.

When God shall guide my soul above  
 By the soft cords of heavenly love,  
 When the vain cares of earth depart,  
 And tuneful voices swell my heart,  
 Then shall each word, each note I raise,  
 Burst forth in pealing hymns of praise,  
 And all not offered at His shrine,  
 Dear mother, I will place on thine.

"It was long before I could regain sufficient composure to return to her. When I did so, I found her sweetly calm, and she greeted me with a smile so full of affection, that I shall cherish the recollection of its brightness until my latest breath. It was the last piece she ever wrote, except a parody of four lines of the hymn, 'I would not live always,' which was written within the last week of her life.

'I would not live always, thus fettered by sin,  
 Temptation without and corruption within,  
 With the soul ever dimmed by its hopes and its fears,  
 And the heart's holy flame ever struggling through tears.'

~~~~~\*~~~~~

"Thus far, in preparing this memoir, we have availed ourselves almost entirely of copious memoranda, furnished us, at our request, by Mrs. Davidson; but when the narrator approached the closing scene of this most affecting story, the heart of the mother gave out, and she found herself totally inadequate to the task. Fortunately, Dr. Davidson had retained a copy of a letter, written by her in the midst of her affliction, to Miss Sedgwick, in reply to an epistle from that lady, expressive of the kindest sympathy, and making some inquiries relative to the melancholy event. We subjoin that letter entire, for never have we read anything of the kind more truly eloquent or deeply affecting.

"Saratoga Springs.

"Yes, my dear Miss Sedgwick; she is an angel now; calmly and sweetly she sunk to her everlasting rest, as a babe gently slumbers on its mother's bosom. I thank my Father in heaven that I was permitted to watch over her, and I trust administer to her comfort during her illness. I know, my friend, you will not expect either a very minute or connected detail of the circumstances preceding her change, from me at this time, for I am indeed bowed down with sorrow. I feel that I am truly desolate, how desolate I will not attempt to describe. Yet in the depth of grief I have consolations of the purest, most soothing and exalted nature. I would not, indeed I could not murmur, but rather bless my God that he has in the plenitude of his goodness made me, even for a brief space on earth, the honored mother of such an angel. O, my dear Miss Sedgwick, I wish you could have seen her during the last two months of her brief sojourn with us. Her meekness and patience, and her even cheerful bearing were unexampled. But when she was assured that all the tender and endearing ties which bound her to earth were about to be severed, when she saw that life and all its bright visions were fading from her eyes — that she was standing at the entrance of the dark valley which must be traversed in her way to the eternal world, the struggle was great, but brief, — she caught the hem of her Saviour's robe and meekly bowed to the mandate of her God. Since the beginning of August, I have watched this tender blossom with intense anxiety, and marked her decline with a breaking heart; and although from that time until the period of her departure, I never spent a whole night in bed, my excitement was so strong that I was unconscious of the want of sleep. O, my dear madam, the whole course of her decline was so unlike any other death-bed scene I ever witnessed; there was nothing of the gloom of a sick-chamber; a charm was in and around her; a holy light seemed to pervade everything belonging to her. There was a sacredness, if I may so express it, which seemed to tell the presence of the Divinity. Strangers felt it, all acknowledged it. Very few were admitted to her sick-room, but those few left it with an elevation of heart new, solemn, and delightful. She continued to ride out as long as the weather was mild, and even after she became too weak to walk she frequently desired to be taken into the parlor, and when there, with all her little implements of drawing and writing, her books, and even her little work-box and basket beside her; she seemed to think that by these little attempts at her usual employments, she could conceal from me, for she saw my heart was breaking, the ravages of disease and her consequent debility. The New Testament was her daily study, and a portion of every day was spent in private, in self-examination and prayer. My dear Miss Sedgwick, how I have felt my own littleness,

my total unworthiness, when compared with this pure, this high-souled, intellectual, yet timid, humble child; bending at the altar of her God, and pleading for pardon and acceptance in his sight, and grace to assist her in preparing for eternity. As her strength wasted, she often desired me to share her hours of retirement, and converse with her and read to her, when unable to read herself. Oh! how sad, how delightful, how agonizing is the memory of the sweet and holy communion we then enjoyed. Forgive me, my friend, for thus mingling my own feelings with the circumstances you wished to know; and, oh! continue to pray that God will give me submission under this desolating stroke. She was my darling, my almost idolized child; truly, truly, you have said, the charm of my existence. Her symptoms were extremely distressing, although she suffered no pain. A week before her departure she desired that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper might be administered to her. 'Mother,' said she, 'I do not desire it because I feel worthy to receive it; I feel myself a sinner; but I desire to manifest my faith in Christ by receiving an ordinance instituted by himself but a short time before his crucifixion.' The Holy Sacrament was administered by Mr. Babcock. The solemnity of the scene can be better felt than described. I cannot attempt it. After it was over, a holy calm seemed to pervade her mind, and she looked almost like a beatified spirit. The evening following she said to me, 'Mother, I have made a solemn surrender of myself to God; if it is his will, I would desire to live long enough to prove the sincerity of my profession, but his will be done; living or dying I am henceforth devoted to God.' After this, some doubt seemed to intrude, her spirit was troubled. I asked her if there was anything she desired to have done, any little arrangements to be made, anything to say which she had left unsaid, and assured her that her wishes should be sacred to me. She turned her eyes upon me with an expression so sad, so mournfully sweet: 'Mother, "When I can read my title clear to mansions in the skies," then I will think of other matters.' Her hair, which when a little child had been often cut to improve its growth, was now very beautiful, and she usually took much pains with it. During the whole course of her sickness I had taken care of it. One day, not long before her death, she said, evidently making a great effort to speak with composure, 'Mother, if you are willing I will have my hair cut off; it is troublesome; I should like it better short.' I understood her at once; she did not like to have the idea of death associated with those beautiful tresses which I had loved to braid. She would have them taken off while living. I mournfully gave my consent, and she said, 'I will not ask you, my dear mother, to do it; my friend, Mrs. F-- , will be with me to night, and she will do it for me.' The dark rich locks were severed at midnight; never shall I forget the expression of her young faded face as I entered the room. 'Do not be agitated, dear mamma, I am more comfortable now. Lay it away, if you please, and to-morrow I will arrange and dispose of it. Do you know that I view my hair as something sacred? It is a part of myself, which will be reunited to my body at the Resurrection.' She had sat in an easy-chair or reclined upon a sofa for several weeks.

"On Friday, the 22d of November, at my urgent entreaty, she consented to be laid upon the bed. She found it a relief, and sunk into a deep sleep, from which she was only awoke when I aroused her, to take some refreshment. When she awoke she looked and spoke like an angel, but soon dropped asleep as before. Oh! how my poor heart trembled, for I felt that it was but the precursor to her long last rest, although many of our friends thought she might yet linger some weeks. A total loss of appetite and a difficulty in swallowing prevented her from taking any nourishment throughout the day, and when we placed her in the easy-chair, at night, in order to arrange her bed, I offered her some nice food, which I had prepared, and found she could not take it. My feelings amounted almost to agony. She said, 'Do not be distressed. I will take it by and bye.' I seated myself beside her, and she said, 'Surely, my dear mother, you have many consolations. You are gathering a little family in heaven to welcome you.' My heart was full; when I could speak, I said, 'Yes, my love, I feel that I am indeed gathering a little family in heaven to bid you welcome, but when they are all assembled there, how dreadful to doubt whether I may ever be permitted to join the circle.' 'Oh, hush, dear, dear mother; do not indulge such sad thoughts; the fact of your having trained this little band to inhabit that holy place is sufficient evidence to me that you will not fail to join us there.' I was with her myself that night, and a friend in the neighborhood sat up also. On Saturday morning, after I had taken half an hour's sleep, I found her quiet as a sleeping infant. I prepared her some food, and when I awoke her to take it, she said, 'Dear mother, I will try, if it is only to please you.' I fed her, as I would have fed a babe. She smiled sweetly and said, 'Mother, I am again an infant.' I asked if I should read to her; she said yes, she would like to have me read a part of the Gospel of John. I did so, and then said, 'My dear Margaret, you look sweetly composed this morning. I trust all is peace within your heart.' 'Yes, mother, all is peace, sweet peace. I feel that I can do nothing for myself. I have cast my burden upon Christ.' I asked if she could rest her hopes there in perfect confidence. 'Yes,' she replied, 'Jesus will not fail me. I can trust him.' She then sank into a deep sleep, as on the preceding day. In the afternoon Mr. and Mrs. H. came from Ballston; they were much affected by the change a few days had made in her appearance. I awoke her, fearing she might sleep too long, and said her friends had come. She extended her arms to them both, and kissed them, saying to Mr. H. that he found her a late riser, and then sank to sleep again. Mrs. H. remained with us that night. About sunset I spoke to her. She awoke and answered me cheerfully, but observing that I was unusually depressed, she said, 'Dear mother, I am wearing you out.' I replied, 'My child, my beloved child, it is not that; the thought of our separation fills me with anguish.' I never shall forget the expression of her sweet face, as she replied, 'Mother, my own dear mother, do not grieve. Our parting will not be long; in life we were inseparable, and I feel that you cannot live without me. You will soon join me, and we shall part no more.' I kissed her pale cheek, as I bent over her, and finding my agitation too strong to repress, I left the room. She soon after desired to get up; she said she must have a coughing fit, and she could bear it better in the chair. When there she began to cough, and her distress was beyond description: her strength was soon exhausted, and we again carried her to the bed. She coughed from six until half-past ten. I then prevailed on her to take some nutritious drink, and she fell asleep. My husband and Mrs. H. were both of them anxious that I should retire and get some rest, but I did not feel the want of it; and impressed as I was with the idea that this was the last night she would pass on earth, I could not go to bed. But others saw not the change, and to satisfy them, I went at 12 to my room, which opened into hers. There I sat listening to every sound. All seemed quiet; I twice opened the door, and Mrs. H. said she slept, and had taken her drink as often as directed, and again urged me to go to bed. A little after 2 I put on my night-dress, and laid down. Between 3 and 4 Mrs. H. came in haste for ether. I pointed to the bottle, and sprang up. She said, I entreat, my dear Mrs. Davidson, that you do not rise; there is no sensible change, only a turn of oppression. She closed the door, and I hastened to rise, when Mrs. H. came again, and said Margaret has asked for her mother. I flew — she held the bottle of ether in her own hand, and pointed to her breast. I poured it on her head and chest. She revived. 'I am better now,' said she. 'Mother, you tremble, you are cold; put on your clothes.' I stepped to the fire, and threw on a wrapper, when she stretched out both her arms, and exclaimed, 'Mother, take me in your arms.' I raised her, and seating myself on the bed, passed my arms around her waist;

her head dropped upon my bosom, and her expressive eyes were raised to mine. That look I never shall forget; it said, 'Tell me, mother, is this death?' I answered the appeal as if she had spoken. I laid my hand upon her white brow; a cold dew had gathered there; I spoke, 'Yes, my beloved, it is almost finished; you will soon be with Jesus.' She gave one more look, two or three short fluttering breaths, and all was over — her spirit was with its God — not a struggle or groan preceded her departure. Her father just came in time to witness her last breath. For a long half-hour I remained in the same position, with the precious form of my lifeless child upon my bosom. I closed those beautiful eyes with my own hand. I was calm. I felt that I had laid my angel from my own breast, upon the bosom of her God. Her father and myself were alone. Her Sabbath commenced in heaven. Ours was opened in deep, deep anguish. Our sons, who had been sent for, had not arrived, and four days and nights did Ellen, (our young nurse, whom Margaret dearly loved.) and I, watch over the sacred clay. I could not resign this mournful duty to strangers. Although no son or relative was with us in this sad and solemn hour, never did sorrowing strangers meet with more sympathy than we received in this hour of affliction, from the respected inhabitants of Saratoga. We shall carry with us through life the grateful remembrance of their kindness. And now, my dear madam, let me thank you for your kind consoling letter it has given me consolation. My Margaret, my now angel child, loved you tenderly. She recognized in yours a kindred mind, and I feel that her pure spirit will behold with delight your efforts to console her bereaved mother."

She departed this life on the 25th of November, 1838, aged fifteen years and eight months; her earthly remains repose in the grave-yard of the village of Saratoga.

"A few days after her departure," observes Mrs. Davidson in a memorandum, "I was searching the library in the hope of finding some further memento of my lost darling, when a packet folded in the form of a letter met my eye. It was confined with a needle and thread, instead of a seal, and secured more firmly by white sewing-silk, which was passed several times around it; the superscription was, 'For my Mother, Private.' Upon opening these papers, I found they contained the results of self-examination, from a very early period of her life until within a few days of its close. These results were noted and composed at different periods. They are some of the most interesting relics she has left, but they are of too sacred a nature to meet the public eye. They display a degree of self-knowledge and humility, and a depth of contrition, which could only emanate from a heart chastened and subdued by the power of divine grace."

~~~~~\*~~~~~

We here conclude this memoir, which, for the most part, as the reader will perceive, is a mere transcript of the records furnished by a mother's heart. We shall not pretend to comment on these records; they need no comment, and they admit no heightening. Indeed, the farther we have proceeded with our subject, the more has the intellectual beauty and the seraphic purity of the little being we have attempted to commemorate broken upon us; and the more have we shrunk at our own unworthiness for such a task. To use one of her own exquisite expressions, she was "A spirit of heaven fettered by the strong affections of earth;" and the whole of her brief sojourn here seems to have been a struggle to regain her native skies. We may apply to her a passage from one of her own tender apostrophes, to the memory of her sister Lucretia.

"...One who came from Heaven awhile,  
To bless the mourners here,  
Their joys to hallow with her smile,  
Their sorrow with her tear.

Who joined to all the charms of earth  
The noblest gifts of Heaven,  
To whom the Muses at her birth  
Their sweetest smiles had given.

Whose eye beamed forth with fancy's ray,  
And genius pure and high;  
Whose very soul had seemed to bathe  
In streams of melody.

.....

The cheek which once so sweetly beamed,  
Grew pallid with decay;  
The burning fire within consumed  
Its tenement of clay.

Death, as if fearing to destroy,  
Paused o'er her couch awhile;  
She gave a tear for those she loved,  
Then met him with a smile."



*The Davidson family plot in Greenridge Cemetery in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. Margaret's grave is in the center. Although you can't quite see it in this photograph, there is an ornamental column that once stood atop her monument, but which has since been knocked off by vandals, and lies on the grass toward the back; with the urn that was evidently perched on it just in the foreground. The monument itself is also defaced with some graffiti in the way of coloring-over some details of the carving. Margaret's sister Lucretia's body is not with that of her family members but is interred at Riverside Cemetery in Plattsburgh. Photo courtesy of Walter Skold.*

---

William Thomas Sherman  
<http://www.gunjones.com>  
[http://www.scribd.com/w Sherman\\_1](http://www.scribd.com/w Sherman_1)